The Paris Review

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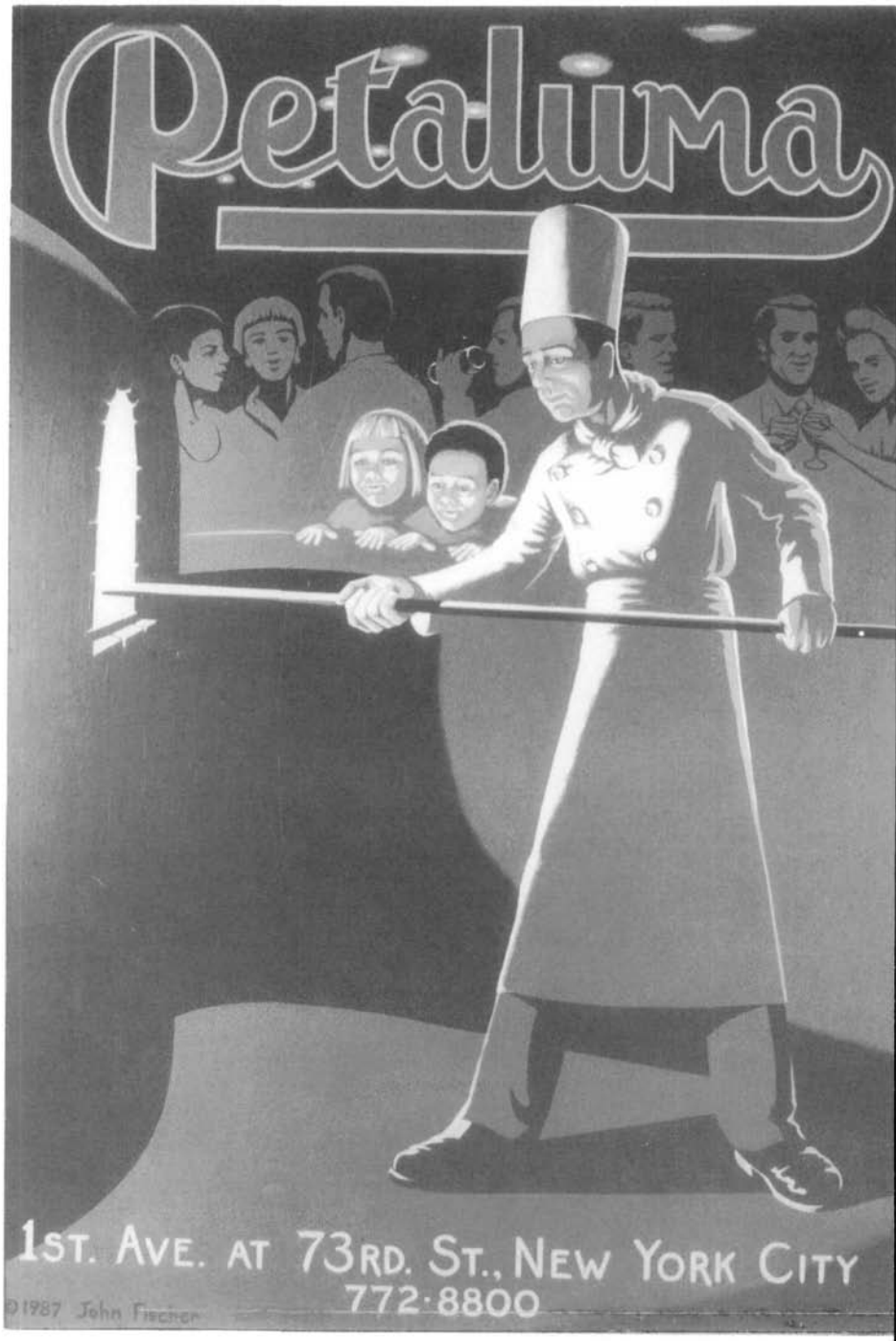

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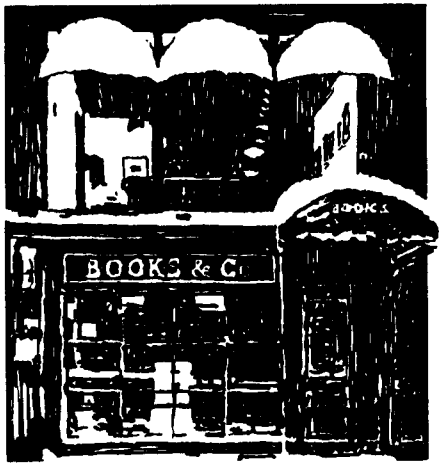

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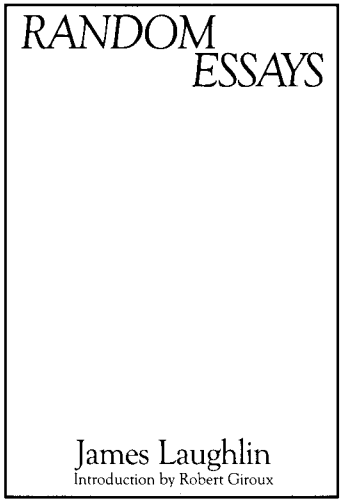

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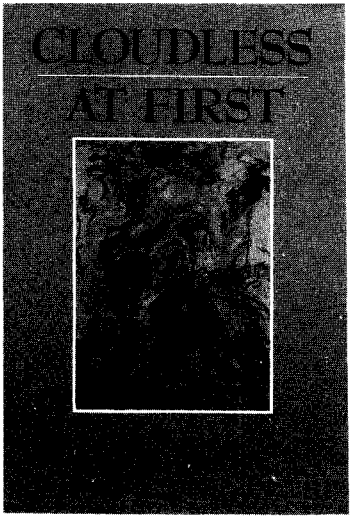

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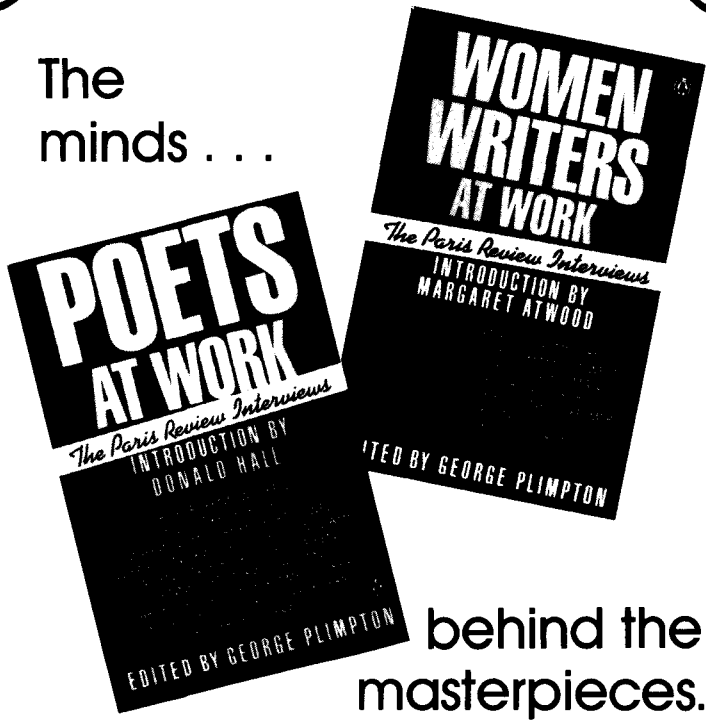

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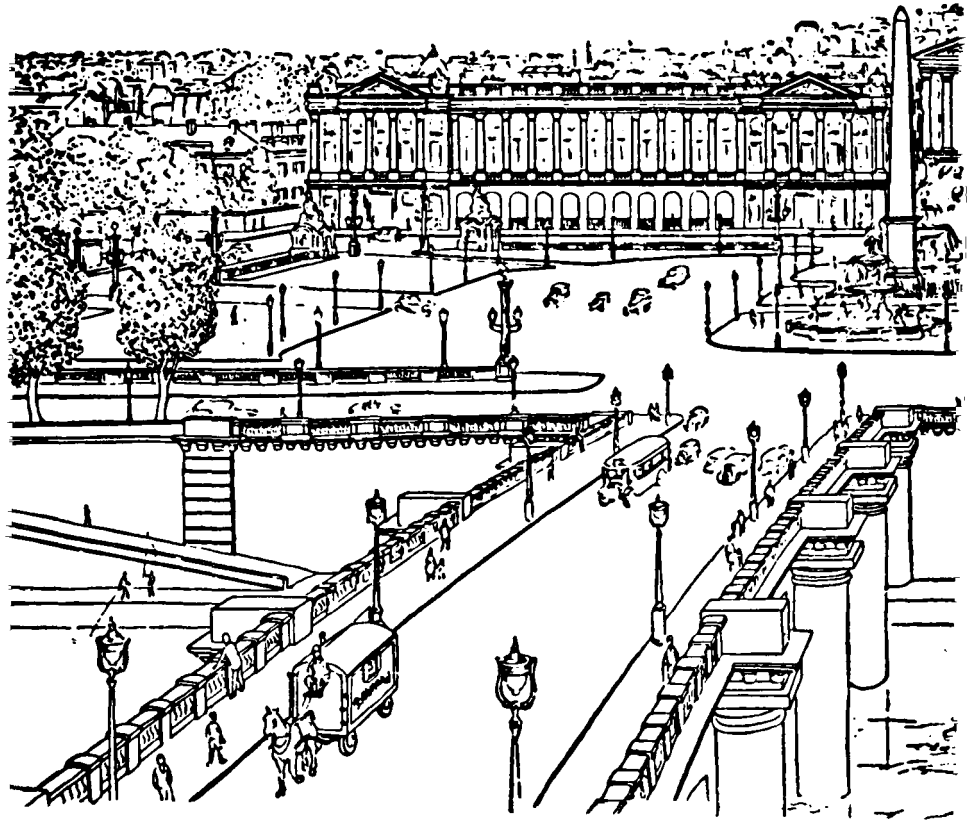

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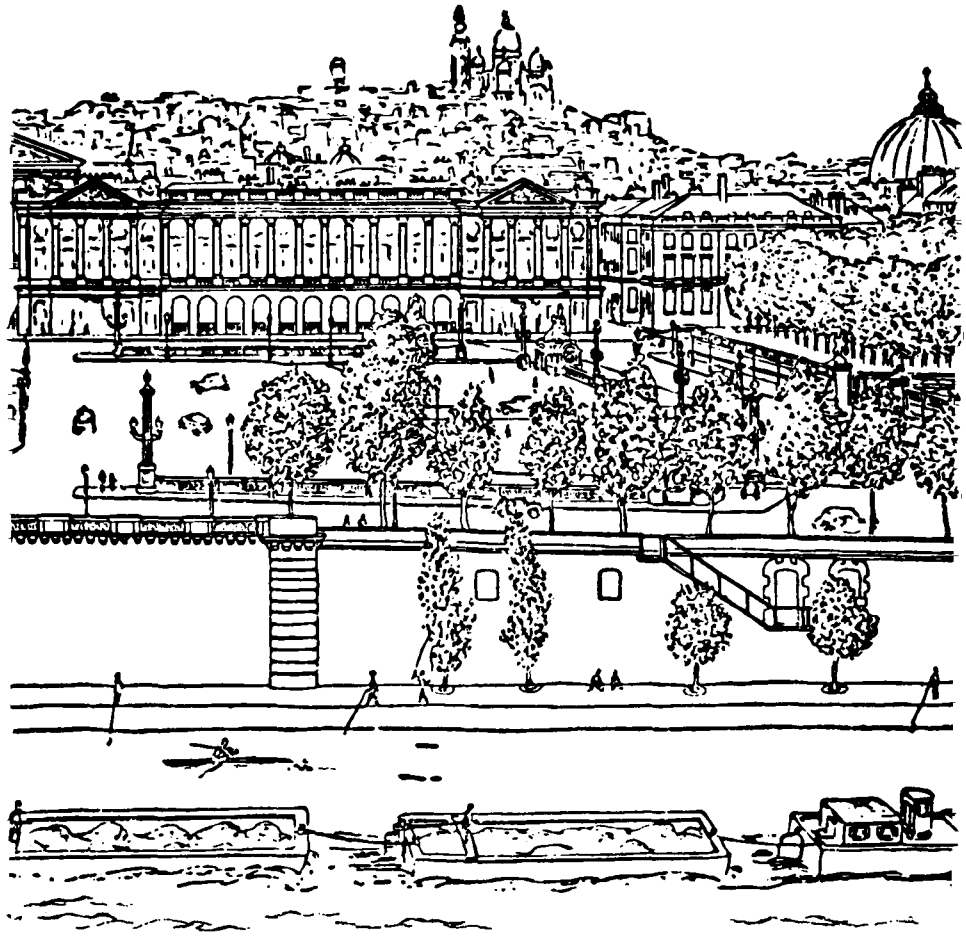

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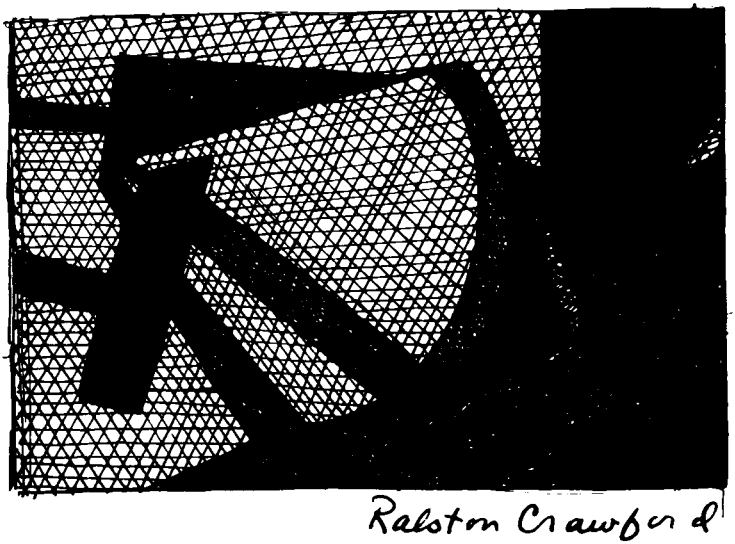

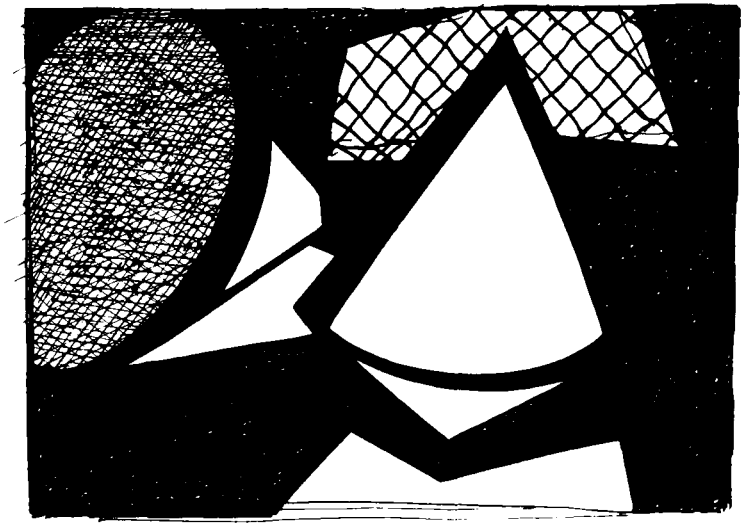

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from In Search of Lost Time

Marcel Proust

translated by Richard Howard

Mr. Howard has provided some general observations about his work-in-progress—a new translation of Proust's epic. Following that is a short interview with Mr. Howard in which George Plimpton asks more specific questions.

The great works are ageless, but their translations date; indeed, as Walter Benjamin remarks, the subsequent translations of great works mark their stages of continued life. In most cases, even the case of so extensive a work as *War and Peace*, translations appear at intervals of about a generation. *The Tale of Genji*, for all its length, has lately found a second translation, for none is *definitive* (not even Arthur Waley's). In the case of Marcel Proust, copyright problems and consequent production costs have delayed what in the case of Mann, of Lorca, of Brecht and Genet has proved an unopposable impulse. In 1972, this undertaking—a second version of Proust's work—was first entertained, if that is the right word, but only last year did the work slide out of copyright, whereupon three

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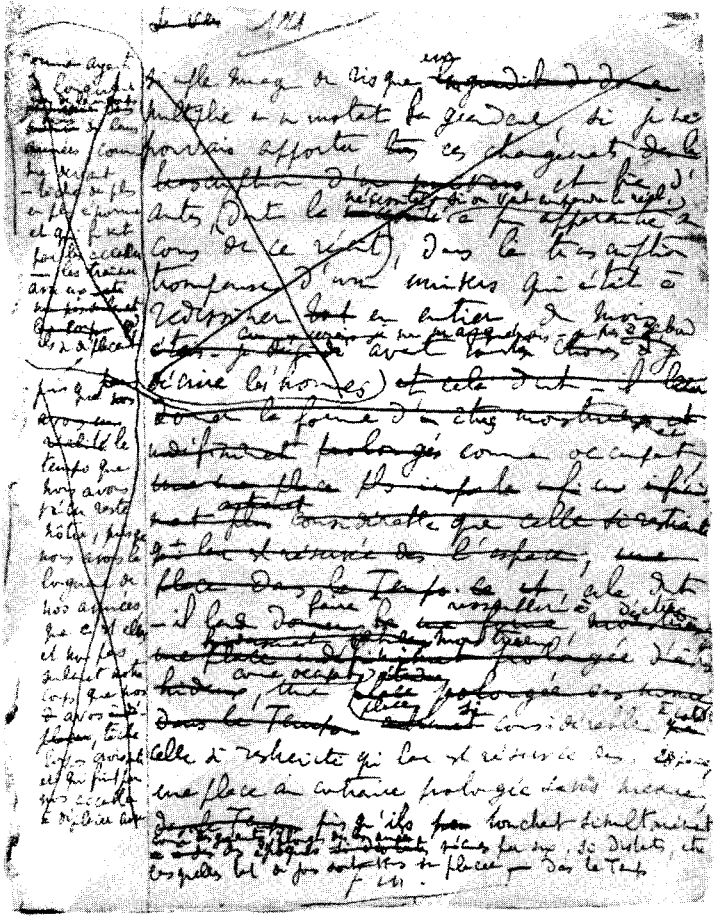

A page from the manuscript of Marcel Proust's Du Côté de chez Swann.

new French editions immediately appeared. I have been working from the Garnier-Flammarion version, published under the general editorship of Jean Milly, and it is hoped that *In Search of Lost Time* will appear, volume by volume, during the next septenate. What appears here is susceptible still of revision, but I am unlikely to be persuaded to alter the opening phrase; it has become a sort of symbol, for me, of the work's tenor (and bass). I have tried, throughout, for the sound of

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the Proustian sentence, its tempo and suspension, recalling that the last word, in French, means as well a source of light, indeed a chandelier.

—Richard Howard

GP

The first line of *Remembrance of Things Past* is one of the most famous in literature. How does your version differ from the others?

RH

Three versions of Proust's first sentence—"*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure.*"—have been published. The Scott Moncrieff-Kilmartin: "For a long time I used to go to bed early." James Grieve (an Australian professor): "Time was, when I always went to bed early." And mine: "Time and again, I have gone to bed early."

GP

And what is the thinking behind your version?

RH

To begin with, "time and again" seems one of those cell-like phrases which sums up a meaning of the whole book, as *longtemps* does in French. I admire Professor Grieve's "time was", but it doesn't have the notion of recurrence that I wanted. It seemed to me that what was needed was not only an opening phrase which would reveal the book's meaning, but one that would begin with the word "time", which would be the last word in the book as well, as it is in French.

GP

Were there other considerations?

RH

Roger Shattuck has an essay about this, and Alfred Corn has

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explored it in *his* essays too: in the whole book, the only use of the *passé composé* occurs, to all intents and purposes, in the first sentence. Oh sometimes characters use this tense in speech, but the narrative is virtually never in the *passé composé* (*je me suis couché*). So that one hears a deliberate little jolt there; I wanted to echo that.

GP

A bit of history: if one had to remark on C.K. Scott Moncrieff as a translator, would one give him good marks?

RH

Indeed. Very good. You know, he also translated a lot of Stendhal, as well as the *Chanson de Roland*. His translation was initially done on speculation—because he admired the book so much. He sent it in to Chatto and Windus—on speculation!

GP

There must have been a number of people who tried . . .

RH

Ford Madox Ford said he would have liked to do it. He felt it was something he could have done. But as for the last volume, the actual translation . . . well, that's complicated. Scott Moncrieff had died after completing the first six parts, and the seventh, *Le Temps Retrouvé*, was translated by Stephen Hudson (Sidney Schiff) in England, and by Frederick Blossom in America. Then this last part was translated anew by Andreas Mayor, and that's the one in print now. It was so good that there were plans to commission Mayor to do all the preceding parts, but then he died too. Even Terence Kilmartin, who revised the Scott Moncrieff version, developed a brain tumor (which he has survived). Of course I took all this into consideration when I began the translation—I started with the last volume first. I thought that might just save me. Though the Mayor version is tough competition. I think it's the only part

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of the book where my version may not show up as better. With the other volumes, I have some reason to hope that my work will hold up very well.

GP

When you translate, can you resist taking a peek to see how other translators have done it?

RH

I always look. I believe all translators do, in this situation. There's not much danger of coming up with the same words, unless it's a very simple sentence where there really is no choice. In Proust, the rhythm, the phrasing, the movement of the sentence, even the grammar—it's all so complex that it would be almost impossible to repeat anyone else's work. Because of that I'm all the more aware of the differences, and of how admirable Scott Moncrieff's work often is.

GP

What about Professor Grieve?

RH

He began a new translation for the Australian National University in Canberra. I don't believe he knew that Kilmartin was revising Scott Moncrieff. He had completed the first part, which he too calls *Swann's Way*, before he found out. I don't think he's going on with it. Oddly enough, his lively translation is not very close to the French. It's more like an improvisation on Proustian themes—and I don't feel that's what readers want. They want to read what Proust wrote. And as a translator, it seems to me, you have an obligation not to change, not to add . . . For instance, in that first sentence, Grieve adds the word "always". I can't see doing that. And throughout, Grieve adds, rewrites really. Nonetheless, I take great interest in reading him, and the other translators. They're very helpful. Almost as helpful as the new French editors. Of course I don't feel it would be honorable *not* to look at them. The honorable

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thing is to make as good a translation as you can. You get your "good" wherever you find it.

GP

How many versions of the first line of *Swann's Way* did you jot down before you decided what you wanted.

RH

Oh, dozens. And people keep offering me more. Most of my correspondents are pleasant enough about their suggestions (though sometimes people are quite acerb: they assure me I am not qualified to undertake the task, and offer me the *right* version). I remember one that began: "Repeatedly I remained in bed . . ." And I had a letter from one woman, a doctor, who admitted that she had never read Proust but who insisted she could tell from the French title that I didn't understand the book's subject. She had not read the book, but she knew . . . I think that once you propose a problem or a puzzle, there are always people who want to solve it their way, and who feel you have not examined certain concepts . . . I must say I *have* given the matter a good deal of thought. I can't imagine a new solution that would surprise me. But I still get suggestions from the most varied sources. And of course that's fine. Perhaps everyone should translate Proust for himself—that would be a good way of reading him, no?

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COMBRAY I

Time and again I have gone to bed early. Often enough, my candle just out, my eyes would close even before I had time to realize, "I'm falling asleep." And half an hour later, the thought that it was bedtime would wake me; I would try to put down the book which I believed was still in my hands and blow out the candle; still asleep, I would reflect on what I had been reading, but such reflections took a peculiar turn, as if I myself had become what the book was about: a church, a string quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V. . . This notion would persist several seconds after I woke, and though nothing about it seemed irrational, it lay like scales upon my eyes and kept them from discerning that the candle was no longer lit; then it would begin to grow unintelligible, like the thoughts of a previous existence after metempsychosis; the book's subject would withdraw from me—I was free to deal with it or not; now I could see again, and I was amazed to find a darkness around me soothing to my eyes but perhaps even more so to my mind, which found it causeless, unaccountable, dark indeed. I would wonder what time it could be; I kept hearing the whistling of trains which, remote or nearby, like birdsong in the woods, revealing the distances, suggested the extent of the unfrequented landscape where a traveler hurries toward the nearest station; and the path he follows will be etched in his memory by the excitement due to new places, to unaccustomed actions, to recent conversations and to farewells under an unfamiliar lamp which pursue him into the silence of the night, to the impending pleasure of his return.

Tenderly I would press my cheeks against the pillow's smooth cheeks, as plump and cool as the cheeks of our childhood. I would strike a match to look at my clock. Nearly midnight. This is the hour when a sick man on a journey, obliged to sleep in an unknown hotel and wakened by a bout of fever, rejoices to see a streak of light under the door. How fortunate, it's morning already! Any moment now the staff will be on call, he can ring and someone will come to look after him.

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Hope of relief inures him to discomfort. Weren't those footsteps he just heard? The footsteps come closer, then fade away. And the streak of light under the door has vanished; it is midnight; the gas-lamps in the corridor have just been extinguished; the last servant has gone, and the whole night must be suffered through with no recourse.

I would fall back to sleep and sometimes wake only for a moment, long enough to hear the organic creaking of the woodwork, to stare into the kaleidoscope of darkness, to enjoy, thanks to a brief glimmer of consciousness, the sleep shrouding the furniture, the room, the world I was only a small part of and whose insensibility I would soon rejoin. Or else in my sleep I had involuntarily returned to a forever-vanished stage of my early life, once more a victim of childhood terrors, for example that my great-uncle would pull my curls, a fear which had been dispelled—the dawn for me of a new era—the day they were cut off. I had forgotten this event during my sleep; its memory would come back to me once I had managed to wake up in order to escape my great-uncle's hands, but as a precautionary measure I would wrap my pillow around my head before returning to the world of dreams.

Sometimes, the way Eve was made from Adam's rib, a woman would be created during my sleep from a strained position of my thigh. Formed by the pleasure I was about to enjoy, she seemed in my imagination to be giving it to me: my body, taking its own warmth for hers, tried to unite with her, and I would wake up. All other humans were alien to me compared with this woman I had left only seconds ago; my cheek was still warm from her kiss, my body stiff under the weight of hers. If, as sometimes happened, she had the features of a woman I knew in life, I would dedicate myself to finding her again, like a man setting off on a journey to see a longed-for city with his own eyes and supposing that the charm of a dream can be enjoyed in reality. Gradually my recollection would fade, I had forgotten the girl in my dream.

A sleeping man holds in a ring around him the sequence of the hours, the order of the years and of the universe. He consults them instinctively upon waking and in them reads,

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all at once, the point on earth's surface he occupies, the time which has elapsed until his waking; but their hierarchies can be confused, can be destroyed. If toward morning, after a bout of insomnia, sleep should overcome him while he is reading, in a position too different from the one in which he usually drops off, he need merely raise his arm to halt the sun and reverse its course, and in his first waking moment he will no longer know what time it is—he will suppose he has only just gone to bed. If he should doze off in a still more abnormal and divergent position, for example sitting in an armchair after dinner, then the disruption of the unsettled worlds will be complete, the enchanted armchair will send him hurtling into time and space, and when he does open his eyes, he will imagine himself lying, months earlier, in another country. But it was enough that, in my own bed, my sleep should be deep, my mind entirely at ease; then I would lose all sense of where I had fallen asleep, and when I woke in the middle of the night, since I did not know where I was, I would not even realize at first who I was; all I had, in its primal simplicity, was the sentiment of existence itself as it may throb within an animal; I was more at a loss than any cave man; but then the memory—not yet of the place where I was, but of several of the places I had lived and where I might have been—came like help from on high to save me from the void I could not have escaped on my own; in one second I passed over centuries of civilization, and the vaguely-glimpsed image of oil-lamps, then of wing-collar shirts, gradually reconstituted the original features of my identity.

Perhaps the immobility of things around us is imposed upon them by our certainty that they are themselves and not otherwise—by the immobility of our mind confronting them. Certainly when I would wake in this way, my mind struggling unsuccessfully to discover where I was, everything circled around me in the dark: things, places, years. Too numb to move, my body interrogated the form of its fatigue in order to deduce from its limbs' position the direction of the wall, the location of the furniture, to reconstruct and name its whereabouts. Its memory—the memory of its ribs, its knees,

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its shoulders—offered in succession several of the rooms where it had slept, while the invisible walls around it, changing places according to the shape of an imagined room, circled in the shadows. And even before my mind, hesitating on the thresholds of time and shape, had identified the room by comparing circumstances, my body would recall the style of bed in each one, the location of doors, how windows caught the light, the existence of a hallway, along with the thought which was in my mind when I had fallen asleep and which I would recover upon waking. My aching side, trying to discover its orientation, would suppose, for example, that it was facing the wall in a big canopied bed, and immediately I would think, "Why, I managed to fall asleep even though Maman didn't come to say goodnight"; I would be in the country at my grandfather's, though he had been dead for many years, and my body, the side I was lying on—faithful guardian of a past my mind should never have forgotten—recovered the glow of the urn-shaped Bohemian-glass nightlight hanging by tiny chains from the ceiling, the Siena-marble mantelpiece in the bedroom of my grandparents' house at Combray, in a remote past which at this moment I vaguely imagined was the present and which I would soon visualize more clearly once I was wide awake.

Then recurred the memory of a new position; the wall would shift in another direction: I was in my bedroom at Mme. de Saint-Loup's, in Tansonville; Lord, it's at least ten, dinner must be over! I would have overslept during the nap I took every evening after my walk with Mme. de Saint-Loup, before dressing for dinner. Indeed many years have passed since Combray, where, however late we returned, it was the sunset's red gleam I would see in the panes of my bedroom window. It's a different life we lead in Tansonville, at Mme. de Saint-Loup's, a different kind of pleasure I take in venturing out only after dark, exploring by moonlight those lanes where I used to play in the sunshine; and from far off I glimpse the room where I will have fallen asleep instead of getting dressed, picked out by the glow of the lamp, sole beacon in the darkness.

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These vague and whirling evocations would never last more than a few seconds; often my momentary uncertainty about where I was would make no clearer choice among the various suppositions it consisted of than, when we see a galloping horse, we can isolate the successive positions revealed by the Kinetoscope. But I had managed to glimpse one or another of the rooms I had slept in during my life, and ultimately I would recall them all during the long reveries that occurred after waking: bedrooms in winter where as soon as you lie down you burrow your way into a lair woven out of the most disparate materials—a corner of the pillow, the top of the bedclothes, the fringe of a shawl, the side of the bed, and an issue of the pink *Journal des Débats*, all of which, like a nesting bird, you finally unite by continuous pressure; where in icy weather you relish your seclusion from the outside world (like the sea swallow which tunnels deep in the warm earth to nest), and where, the fire kept burning all night in the grate, you sleep in a great cloak of warm and smoky air, pierced by gleams from the reviving embers, a kind of impalpable alcove, a warm cavern hollowed from the heart of the room itself, a torrid zone whose thermic boundaries keep being altered by face-cooling drafts from the corners and from areas around the windows or farthest away from the fireplace and therefore chilly again;—bedrooms in summer where you enjoy being part of the warm night, where moonlight falling on the half-open shutters extends its magic ladder to the foot of the bed where you are sleeping almost in the open air, like a titmouse swayed by the breeze on a moonbeam's tip;—sometimes the Louis XVI bedroom, so gay that I had not been too wretched there even the first night, where the slender columns airily supporting the ceiling parted so gracefully to show the place reserved for the bed;—sometimes, how different! the tiny bedroom whose mahogany-timbered pyramidal ceiling rose two stories above me, where from the first instant I had been morally intoxicated by the unfamiliar scent of vetiver, convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the brazen indifference of a clock chattering as loud as if I were not there; where a strange and pitiless cheval-glass on square legs, barring one of

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the corners of the room, suddenly carved an unexpected region out of the mild plenitude of my usual field of vision; where my mind, struggling for hours to break free, stretching upward to assume precisely the shape of the room and fill its vast funnel to the very top, had endured many bad nights, ears cocked, nostrils flared, heart pounding: until habit had changed the color of the curtains, had silenced the clock, had taught pity to the cruel and slanting mirror, had disguised if not entirely dispelled the scent of vetiver and noticeably lowered the ceiling's apparent height. Habit! that cunning but deliberate housekeeper who begins by letting your mind suffer for weeks in temporary lodgings, but whom you are glad enough to employ all the same, for without habit and reduced to merely its own resources, your mind would be powerless to make any room endurable.

By now of course I would be wide awake, my body had shifted position for the last time, and the good angel of certainty had brought everything around me to a standstill, had settled me under my quilt, in my own bedroom, and in the dark had more or less put where they belonged my chest of drawers, my desk, my fireplace, the window overlooking the street, and both doors. But even though I knew I was not in any of the rooms which the momentary bewilderment of waking had revealed if not as a distinct image, at least as a possible presence, my memory had been aroused; usually I would not try to go back to sleep right away; I would spend most of the night remembering our old life—in Combray at my great-aunt's, in Balbec, in Paris, in Doncières, in Venice, even elsewhere; remembering the places, the people I had known there, what I had seen of them, what I had been told about them.

In Combray, late every afternoon, long before I would have to go to bed and stay there, without sleeping, far from my mother and my grandmother, my bedroom again became the painful focus of my fantasies. To divert me until dinnertime on the evenings when I seemed too miserable, someone had thought of giving me a magic lantern which could be fitted

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over my lamp; and in the fashion of the first Gothic architects and masters of stained glass, it replaced my opaque walls with impalpable iridescence, supernatural apparitions in all the colors of the rainbow, where legends were depicted as in a trembling and momentary church window. Yet my misery was only intensified, for the change in lighting was enough to destroy the familiar look of my room which, except for the torment of going to bed, had made it bearable to me. Now I no longer recognized it and was as anxious there as in a room in some hotel or "chalet," arriving for the first time after a train journey.

Riding at a jerky gait, Golo, bent on villainy, emerged from a little triangular woods upholstering the hillside with dark green velvet and lurched toward the castle of poor Geneviève de Brabant. This castle was cut off on one side by a curving line, actually the edge of one of the oval glass slides that fit into the lantern. Only a patch of castle wall could be seen, with a moor in the foreground where Geneviève, wearing an azure zone, stood dreaming. Both castle and moor were yellow, although I did not need to see them to know their color, for long before the lantern slides, the bronze sonority of the name Brabant had revealed it to me quite distinctly. Golo would halt a moment and harken sadly to the commentary which my great-aunt was reading aloud and which he seemed to understand perfectly, accommodating his posture, with a meekness that had a majesty all its own, to the details of the text; then he rode off at the same jerky gait. And nothing could halt his slow progress. If the lantern was moved, I could still make out Golo's horse riding across the window-curtains, bulging and dwindling with their folds. Golo's body was of the same supernatural essence as his steed's, adapting itself to any material obstacle, incorporating every impediment in its path, even the doorknob over which immediately and invincibly flowed his red gown or his pale countenance as noble and as melancholy as ever, but betraying no distress at such transvertebration.

Of course I was delighted by these brilliant projections that seemed to emanate from a Merovingian past and surrounded

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me with such ancient gleams of history. Yet what anxiety I suffered from the intrusion of beauty and mystery into a room I had finally managed to imbue with enough of my own identity to take no more notice of it than of myself. Once the anesthesia of habit had worn off, how melancholy were my thoughts, my feelings! My bedroom doorknob, which differed in my eyes from all other doorknobs in that it seemed to function of its own accord, so unconscious had I become of turning it, was now serving as Golo's astral body. And as soon as the dinner-bell rang, I would race down to the dining-room where the big chandelier, ignorant of Golo and Bluebeard but quite familiar with my family and beef casserole, offered its usual light; and would plunge into Maman's arms which the ordeals of Geneviève de Brabant made all the dearer, while Golo's crimes spurred me to a deeper scrutiny of my own conscience.

After dinner, unfortunately, I would soon have to leave Maman who stayed talking to the others, in the garden if the weather was fine, or in the little sitting-room where everyone gathered on rainy evenings. Everyone except my grandmother, who insisted it was "a pity to stay indoors in the country" and who constantly argued with my father for sending me up to my room to read on the wettest days instead of letting me stay outdoors. "That's no way to make him strong and active," she would say sadly, "and the child needs to develop all the energy and will-power he can." My father would shrug and consult the barometer, for meteorology interested him, while my mother, careful to make no distracting noise, watched with affectionate respect, although not so intently as to risk penetrating such high mysteries. But my grandmother, whatever the weather, even in pouring rain when Françoise would hurriedly drag in the precious wicker chairs lest they get soaked, could be seen out in the empty, rain-lashed garden, smoothing her dishevelled gray hair so that her forehead might more freely imbibe the health-giving wind and rain. She would say: "At last, one can breathe!" and pace the sopping paths—too symmetrically laid out, for her taste, by the new gardener who lacked all feeling for nature and whom my father had been asking since morning if the weather would clear—her jerky, eager little

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steps matching the various responses her soul was moved to by the intoxication of the storm, the power of hygiene, the stupidity of my education, and the symmetry of gardens, rather than by the (to her quite alien) desire to spare her plum-colored skirt the mudstains soon covering it to a height inveterately the bane of her maid's existence.

When these constitutionals of hers were taken after dinner, one thing could always make my grandmother come indoors: this was—at the perigee of those orbits which periodically brought her back, like some insect, to the lights of the little sitting-room where liqueurs were served on the card-table—if my great-aunt called out to her, "Bathilde! Come and stop your husband from drinking cognac!" And just to tease her (so different was the mentality she had brought into my father's family that everyone teased and tormented her), my great-aunt would make him drink a few drops, for my grandfather had been forbidden alcohol. My poor grandmother would come indoors, imploring her husband not to drink any cognac; this would infuriate him, and he would deliberately take a sip, whereupon my grandmother would return to the garden, downcast and discouraged though still smiling, for she was so meek and unassuming that affection for others and indifference to her own troubles mingled in a smile which expressed, contrary to what so many faces show, irony only for herself, and for all of us a sort of caress given by eyes which could not regard those she loved without passionately embracing them with their gaze. This teasing inflicted by my great-aunt, the spectacle of my grandmother's vain entreaties and of her efforts, doomed in advance, to take the liqueur-glass away from my grandfather, were the kind of things you grow used to later in life, to the point of smiling at them and blithely siding with the persecutor deliberately enough to convince yourself that no persecution is involved; but at the time they so horrified me that I wanted to hit my great-aunt. Yet as soon as I would hear "Bathilde, come and stop your husband from drinking cognac!" already a man in my cowardice, I did what we all do, once we have grown up, when we confront suffering and injustice: I chose not to see them; I would climb

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upstairs to sob my heart out under the eaves next to the schoolroom, in a little room that smelled of orris-root and also of the wild-currant bush that had sprouted between the stones of the wall outside and thrust a flowering branch through the open window. Intended for a ruder and more particular function, this room, from which by day you could see as far as the castle keep of Roussainville-le-Pin, long served as a refuge—doubtless because it was the only one where I was allowed to lock myself in—for those of my occupations which required inviolable solitude: reading, revery, masturbation, tears. Alas! I was not to know that it was my weak will and delicate health, and the uncertainty these cast over my future, which distressed my grandmother far more than her husband's minor deviations from his regimen, during those incessant walks of hers, afternoon and evening, when we would see her passing back and forth, tilting her fine face toward the sky, her furrowed brown cheeks which age had turned almost mauve like tilled fields in autumn, latticed, if she was going out somewhere, by a half-raised veil and glistening, whether brought there by the cold or some sad thought, with a forever-drying involuntary tear.

My one consolation, when I had to go up to my room, was that Maman would come and kiss me goodnight once I was in bed. But this goodnight was so brief, she went back down so soon, that I began to suffer the moment I heard her footsteps on the stairs and through the double doors, then along the hallway the rustle of her blue muslin garden dress with its little tassels of braided straw. For this moment heralded the one which would inevitably follow, when she had left me, when she would be downstairs again. So that I actually wanted to postpone this coveted goodnight as long as possible, to extend the period of respite when Maman had not yet come. Sometimes when, after kissing me, she would open the door to leave, I yearned to call her back, to say "one more time," but I knew that then she would frown, for the concession she was making to my anxiety and agitation by coming upstairs to soothe me with a kiss would exasperate my father who considered these rituals absurd, and she would have preferred to

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help me outgrow this need rather than letting me get into the habit of begging her, when she was already at the door, for one more kiss. And to see her frown destroyed whatever peace she had just granted when she leaned over my bed and offered her loving face like a communion-wafer from which my lips might receive her real presence and the power to go to sleep. But those evenings, when Maman in fact stayed so short a time in my room, were still sweet by comparison to the ones when there was company for dinner and she would not come upstairs to say goodnight at all. "Company" usually meant Monsieur Swann who, aside from occasional acquaintances passing through Combray, was almost our only visitor, sometimes for a neighborly dinner (less often since that unfortunate marriage of his, for my parents were unwilling to receive his wife), sometimes dropping in afterwards. The evenings when, sitting round the cast-iron table under the big chestnut tree, we would hear from the far end of the garden not the shrill and exuberant gate-bell which deluged and deafened by its cold, steely, tireless clangor any member of the household who set it off by coming in "without ringing," but the timid, oval, golden cadence of the little visitors' bell, everyone would immediately wonder: "A visitor—who can it be?" though we knew very well it could only be Monsieur Swann; my great-aunt, setting an example by talking very loud and in a deliberately natural tone of voice, would tell us not to whisper so, for nothing was more disagreeable for a new arrival who would assume we were saying things he was not meant to hear; and my grandmother would be sent to reconnoiter, always glad of an excuse to take one more turn around the garden and putting it to use by surreptitiously pulling up some rosebush stakes as she passed in order to make the roses look more natural, like a mother who runs a hand though her son's hair to loosen it after the barber has plastered it down.

We would all sit waiting for my grandmother to bring news of the enemy, as if there could be much choice among possible besiegers, and soon afterwards my grandfather would say: "I recognize Swann's voice." Indeed only his voice was recognizable—it was hard to make out Swann's face with its hooked

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nose, its green eyes under a high forehead fringed by fair, reddish hair cut short like the actor Bressant's, for we used as few lights as possible in the garden so as not to attract mosquitoes. Unobtrusively I would slip indoors to have the liqueurs brought out: my grandmother set great store—regarding it as a friendly gesture—by their not seeming to be served only for company. Monsieur Swann, though much younger, was very attached to my grandfather who had been a close friend of his father, an excellent man though an odd one, for apparently the merest trifle was sometimes enough to check his strongest feelings or divert his train of thought. Several times a year I would hear my grandfather tell the same story at dinner about old Monsieur Swann's reaction to his wife's death after keeping vigil at her bedside day and night. My grandfather, who had not seen him for a long time, had immediately gone to the Swanns' family place near Combray, and to spare him the sight of the body being laid in the coffin, had managed to get his weeping friend out of the death chamber for a while. They were strolling in the grounds where there happened to be a little sunshine, when all at once Monsieur Swann seized my grandfather's arm and exclaimed: "My old friend, how nice it is to be walking here together on such a fine day! Pretty, all these trees, these hawthorns of mine, don't you think? And you've never even mentioned my new pond . . . Don't be such a wet blanket! Feel that little breeze? Ah, let them say what they like, my dear Amédée, life's worth living after all!" Suddenly he remembered his dead wife, and doubtless feeling it would be too hard to explain how he could yield to an impulse of happiness at such a moment, confined himself, in a gesture habitual to him whenever a difficult question arose, to passing his hand over his forehead, rubbing his eyes, and wiping his pince-nez. Yet he was heartbroken by his wife's death, though during the two years by which he survived her, he used to tell my grandfather: "Funny thing, I think of my poor wife often, but never for long at a time." "Often, but never for long, like poor old Swann" had become one of my grandfather's pet phrases, applied to the most various occasions. "Poor old Swann" would certainly have appalled me, had not my grand-

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father—whom I regarded as a better judge than myself and whose word was my law, often leading me in later life to overlook faults I might otherwise have condemned—expostulated with me: "Not at all! The man had a heart of gold!"

For many years, especially before his marriage, when Monsieur Swann *fils* often visited them at Combray, my great-aunt and my grandparents had no suspicion that he had completely abandoned his family's milieu, and that under the sort of incognito this name Swann constituted for us, we were entertaining—with the perfect innocence of law-abiding innkeepers unwittingly lodging a notorious highwayman—one of the most elegant members of the Jockey Club, a favorite friend of the Comte de Paris and the Prince of Wales, one of the men most sought after by the high society of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Our ignorance of his brilliant social life was of course due in part to the reserve and discretion of Swann's character, but also to the fact that middle-class people in those days had devised a rather Hindu notion of society, regarding it as made up of closed castes in which you assumed at birth the status your parents had occupied, and from which nothing but the accidents of an exceptional career or advantageous marriage could raise you to a higher level. Swann's father had been a stockbroker; his son would all his life belong to a caste where fortunes varied, as in a tax bracket, between certain fixed incomes. Knowing his father's associations meant knowing his as well—individuals with whom it was "suitable" to mix. If he had others, they would be bachelor cronies whom old family friends like my parents would disregard all the more indulgently in that Swann, since his parents' death, continued visiting us quite faithfully; but it was more than likely that these people Swann knew outside our acquaintance were the sort he would not dare acknowledge if met in our company. If you had to assign Swann a social coefficient of his own, among the other sons of stockbrokers in similar circumstances, it would have been a little lower than theirs because Swann, quite unpretentious in his habits and a lifelong fanatic about antiques and painting, was now living and storing his collections in an

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old house which my grandmother longed to visit but which was located on the Quai d'Orléans, an address my great-aunt considered ignominious. "Are you really a connoisseur?" she would say to him, "it's for your own good I'm asking—you must be letting the dealers stick you with some awful daubs." She credited him with no discernment whatever, and even from an intellectual point of view had her doubts about a man who avoided all serious subjects in conversation and displayed a tedious pedantry not only when entering into the minute details of a recipe, but even when my grandmother's sisters were discussing artistic subjects. If they urged him to give his opinion, to express his admiration for a picture, he maintained an almost insolent silence for which he then made amends if he could supply factual particulars about the museum where it hung or the date when it had been painted. But as a rule he merely tried to entertain us by describing his latest encounter with people of our acquaintance—the Combray pharmacist, or our coachman, or our cook. Of course these stories made my great-aunt laugh, but she could never decide if this was because of the absurd role he always assigned himself or his comical way of telling them. "You certainly are a character, Monsieur Swann!" And since she was the one rather vulgar member of our family, she was sure to point out to strangers, when Swann was mentioned, that if he chose he could certainly be living on the Boulevard Haussmann or the Avenue de l'Opéra, that his father must have left him four or five million, but that he was . . . eccentric. An eccentricity, moreover, she assumed others must find so amusing that when Swann called in Paris on New Year's Day, bringing a box of *marrons glacés*, she never failed, if there was company, to inquire, "Well, Monsieur Swann, are you still living next door to the wine warehouse so you won't miss your train to Lyon?" And she would glance meaningfully at the other visitors over her pince-nez.

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Five Poems by Stephen Dobyns

The Body's Strength

The mind may not mind death. It means
at last letting go, the inevitable
capitulation. After all, it's tired,
very tired. But the body fights
right to the end. Up, it keeps saying,
you must get up. Think how the body combines
the most improbable collection of parts
from toe nail to ear lobe, knee cap
to armpit, all with different
functions and desires like a room packed
with the strangest people possible—
rabbit punchers to perfume sippers,
hot dog maniacs to telepathic Chinese,
yet even the smallest pore keeps saying,
Keep moving. One might imagine the aging
body is like the donkey, while the mind
is like the man with the whip perched
on the overladen cart, but actually their desires
are the opposite with the donkey plodding
dumbly ahead and the man shouting stop.
What keeps it going? What does the body
enjoy? At the end it can hardly hear much,
taste much, see much, smell much and a lot
just hurts, but still the body must delight
in the feel of itself even when it says ouch,
must love the touch of flesh against bones,
like a young girl wearing a silk dress
for the first time. And then it's stubborn,
one foot plopped down after another—
that's how those pyramids got built.

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Get a cut, skin closes up; eat some poison,
stomach pukes it out; suffer heart break,
the eyes locate a new cutie pretty quick;
get sick and the white cells gang up
to kick the intruder out. Don't stop,
don't stop—the heart a valentine metronome,
a drill sergeant calling out cadence,
the clock hurrying us on to the next second,
but also, luckily, the switch which at last
clicks off, otherwise we would be like turtles
flipped over in the dirt with four feet
pumping the air, pumping the air
and no place left to get to.

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Fingernails

Little excavators, postage stamps
of living stone, you seek to save me
from the encroaching dust—scratch it away,

scratch it away. Do you think if I stood
long enough in one spot, the earth itself
would bury me: wave after wave

of tiny particles, bits of dirt,
until with nobody's help I'd be
six feet under? But you would free me,

or try to, for what can you really do,
diminished claws, dwarfish shovels
against the future? It is not your ability

one cherishes, but your rudimentary
fidelity, sacrificing all to this body
of which you are the true frontier.

No wonder one hears how you scream
when the torturers try to take you from us.
You should be perilous, the body's own

outlaw band, each finger a pistol,
each nail a flashing scimitar,
but you're small: miniscule talons

with which to attack a pimple,
petite mirrors incapable of reflecting.
Yet when death's broom sweeps me

into the ground, you'll keep growing
believing you can scratch your way back
to the surface. Wake up, you might say,

we're still here, we're ready to dig—
while the silence answers with more silence
and a beetle shoves a pebble up a hill.

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Sweat

Lacrimae of the body, for whom do you weep?
What are your griefs, fears? Do you have a favorite
someplace whom violent motion makes you remember?
Does exertion bring her figure to mind and you sob?

Or is it for stasis that you crave, complete
inaction, no past, no future, all muscles at rest.
Or are these drops not tears but the celebration
of the body's flavor: as a roast in the oven

will exude droplets of juice, so the body
in exertion is always cooking? Or perhaps
you are liquid refreshment, the body's nectar,
so that I should run and jump, then scrape myself

with a wine glass, and drink a toast. Here's
to myself—sweet days, sweet nights and the salt
taste of sweat. But no, these drops are tears.
Exertion or heat make the body recollect

what it strives to forget, eventual immobility,
the grave's invitation, as if the body
in motion were bedeviled by contrast—action
reminding it of inaction, time of time's

completion, which leads the body to remember
those days when, pink and smelling of talcum,
its movements were the focus of all attention,
and its parents bent over it with moony smiles

and gentle pats, leading it once again to thoughts
of extinction, as if the body were truly baking,
and death the moment when it is taken from the oven.
For whom does the body in motion weep? It weeps

for itself and the tears roll from its forehead
and the shirt sticks to its back, and dark circles,
like circles under the eyes after a sleepless night,
dark circles stain its clothes beneath the armpits.

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Slipping Away

It could be like one of those dreams
where you must carry water in your hands
for half a mile to put some fire out
and it all drips away through your fingers.

Is this forgetfulness, the world slipping away,
while confusion expands, eating our memories
like a lava flow demolishing a landscape,
thoughts like rabbits baked in their holes?

Here comes my best friend, old what's his name.
And where was that place where I first
made love and who was that girl, the one
I swore ever to be true to? The mind

like a blank screen after the film is over,
the body like the derelict in the front row
and no place to go. The mind like
frozen blue sky in the dead of winter,

the body like the shaven snow-covered fields.
But wasn't this our desire,
the destruction of past and future,
the ability to read the same page

of a book over and over and each time
we chuckle and feel amused—nothing back there
to depress one, nothing ahead to hide from,
the single moment caught like the single

syllable the stutterer is stuck upon,
or the record caught in a single groove
repeating a few organ notes of Bach forever?
But not forever, only until something

lifts the needle and then comes the silence,
the huge one hanging like a banner
between the light and the dark,
and across it is printed whose name?

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Eyelids

Shy defiers of the existential world,
you draw your veil across the unpleasant,
then the head turns away, the body turns away,
the feet trudge off toward someplace nice, but you,
you were the first, you drew the initial curtain.

Oh, cautious celebrators of the decorous,
how much has gone unwitnessed or unjudged,
how much remains unchanged due to your benign
interference? Why reduce the world to this
middle range of behavior, as if the story

contained only happy couples on lawn chairs
nibbling macaroons and sipping soothing drinks.
Don't you fear the darkness will squeeze you tight
because of your ignorance of it?
Oh, my shy ones, forgive this desecration—

the chrome of the scissors will sparkle in your eyes,
while your being closed only simplifies my task.
A few quick snips and the light will shine forever.
Gaze upon it. See that fire, those cold stones.
This is the world to love. There is no other.

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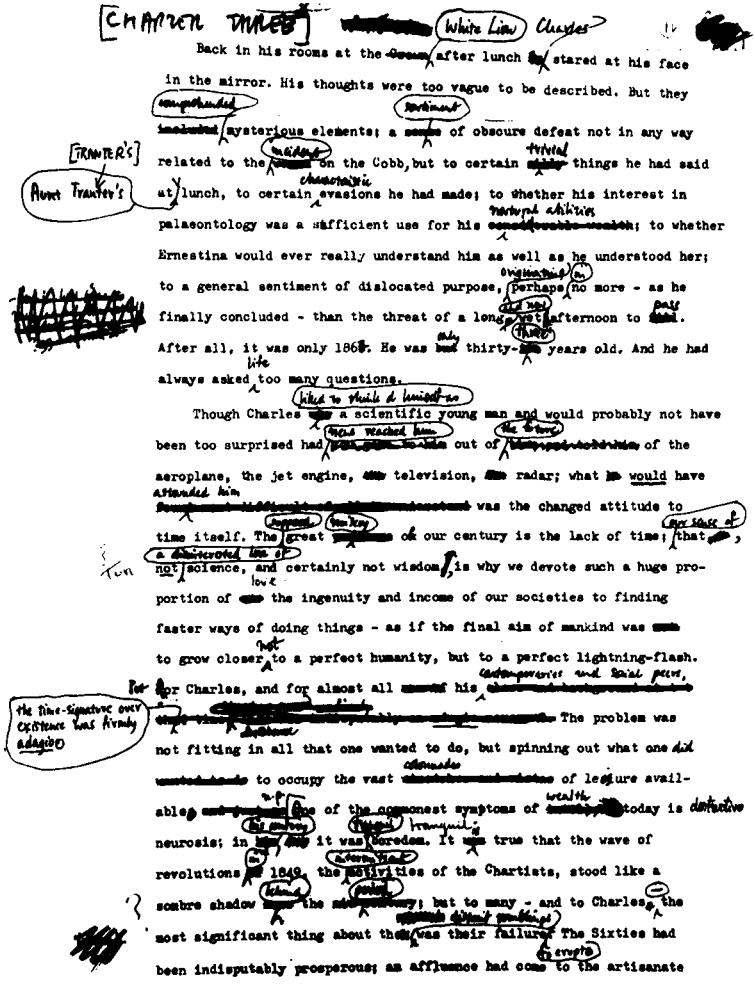

A page from John Fowles' manuscript The French Lieutenant's Woman, *now housed in the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa, Oklahoma.*

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The Art of Fiction CIX
John Fowles

John Fowles was born in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, on March 31, 1926. He attended Bedford School (1940–1944) and then served nearly two years in the Royal Marines. After his four years at Oxford (New College), where he read in French and received a B. A. (Honors) in 1950, Fowles turned away from his conservative upper middle-class background toward a new freedom and a trying decade of apprenticeship as a writer. He supported himself through teaching jobs at the University of Poitiers, at Spetsai, Greece (where he met his wife-to-be, Elizabeth Whitton) and at various schools in and around

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London until his first published novel, The Collector, *appeared in 1963. It became a best-seller, and was made into a film by William Wyler in 1965. These successes did not deter him from going back to earlier projects: the philosopher's notebook (begun at Oxford), in which he attempted to deal with many questions pertinent to contemporary experience, was published as* The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas *in 1964; a first, tortured novel he wrote (inspired largely by his own self-analysis and "conversion" to existential freedom) appeared as* The Magus *in 1965. In that same year he took up residence in Lyme Regis on the Dorset coast.*

The view of Lyme Bay from Fowles's own Belmont House is described in the opening chapters of his most famous novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman *(1969), which won the Silver Pen Award from PEN International and the W. H. Smith Literary Award. The apprenticeship was over. This pseudo-historical novel revealed a new openness to experimentation with narrative voices and an intellectual sophistication that has marked all his later fiction:* The Ebony Tower *(1974),* Daniel Martin *(1977),* Mantissa *(1982), and* A Maggot *(1985).*

But Fowles the novelist, true to the humanistic tradition, has insisted upon playing other roles. He is an imaginative historian, an environmentalist, and a student of natural history—as evidenced in Islands *(1978),* The Tree *(1980),* The Enigma of Stonehenge *(1980), and* A Short History of Lyme Regis *(1982). He has translated and commented on several classic French works, including Perrault's* Cinderella *and Molière's play,* Don Juan. *One comes to a better understanding of his art through a reading of his afterword for Alain-Fournier's famous novel of youthful quest,* The Wanderer, *his foreword to* The Lais of Marie de France, *or his satirical* conte *on the deconstructionist thinkers,* Mantissa. *Just where Fowles stands in relation to the history and culture of his own country is made clear in an early essay suggestively titled, "On Being English but Not British." In spite of a large body of critical literature on his fiction, the best description of his attitudes and procedures in the course of creative composition is the often-anthologized "Notes on Writing a Novel."*

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The interview was done, at Fowles's request, through written exchanges beginning in June 1987 and concluding in April 1989. His desire to proceed "by post" had its origin in a certain dissatisfaction with the several taped interviews he had done and perhaps with some of the academic criticism of his fiction. He would set the record straight. Yet a taped interview was the occasion for our first encounter at his home in November 1985. At that time he gave the impression of great strength and confidence, gentle manner, and enormous capacity for ambiguity and complexity. When that interview was published (in the Michigan Quarterly Review*), he wrote to say that in the future he wanted time to write out more thoughtful responses. On reaching mid-point in our written exchanges, John Fowles suffered a life-threatening stroke. He wrote: "Writing, what it is to be a writer, fills one with horror in their smallness, pettiness. All one's former vanity is folly." But he had the questions before him, he had promised to reply, and partial recovery allowed him to continue. The impact of that stroke on his spirit is described in the interview, but it is most tellingly realized in his concluding quotation of the refrain from Scottish poet William Dunbar's sixteenth-century "Lament for the Makers"*—Timor mortis conturbat me.

INTERVIEWER

Is it accurate to say that you did not begin to establish an identity as a writer until you went to Oxford in 1947 and entered into a rather fashionable revolt against the limitations of a suburban middle-class background?

JOHN FOWLES

Yes, completely accurate, though I think the notion of joining "a rather fashionable revolt" is a little bit wrong. You must remember my generation—I was born in 1926—had spent our late adolescence and early twenties in wartime, followed by a period of national austerity that remained psychologically like war. Oxford in the late 1940s was I think, to all of us lucky enough to be there, a kind of wonderful escape from all that—a happy dream, an alternative world . . . in a sense a

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novel we had heard of, but never actually read until then. Where the individual was paramount, not the nation. I came out of the strict "order" and discipline of the British Marine Corps into the ancient indulgence of Oxford; it was a heady experience for all of us, an intoxication, hardly a matter of revolt.

I should add that in my teens I had a somewhat unusual experience for a youth, having become head boy of my large public school (in Britain really a private school, of course). Head boys were in those days responsible for all minor discipline in the school outside of class, able to give punishments and cane delinquents; we were, so to speak, appointed heads of Gestapo, with a body of lesser prefects to help us spy on and patrol, cow and bully, the several hundred other boys. It was really a very bad system, and I wish I could say that a more sensitive side of myself had revolted against it at once. It did not. The power went to my head, and it was only afterwards —when I had left the school—that I rejected it completely. I have indeed hated all forms of public authority ever since—oh, not every individual representative of it, but the general idea behind it.

Apart from anything else, head boys were largely excused from any other kind of work, and that had fatal results on my own proper "academic" career. We were also supposed to stand as models for the whole system (in my particular school, producing eventual administrators of the already dying British Empire, stiff with every supposed middle-class virtue), and that was a role I came to realize I despised and did not want. This happened in the two years or so of service in the Royal Marines between leaving school and going to Oxford. I arrived in that latter place, in other words, in a state of full rejection of everything I had been earlier taught to believe in. Oxford handsomely confirmed the revolt, rather than initiated it.

INTERVIEWER

What induced you to read in French during your four years at Oxford? What writers particularly impressed you? Was Montaigne, for example, an influence and a model in the formation of your humanistic philosophy?

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FOWLES

This was largely pure chance. I had been fairly good at modern languages in school, and had a very sympathetic master there. It was sort of taken for granted that I would later do them at university. Those were, of course, the days of compulsory conscription. So I was in the Marines from 1944 to 1946, ending as a lieutenant training recruits who hoped to become commandos. I was at the time a little bit torn between joining the Marines permanently or taking the place I had been promised at Oxford. One day we had an official visit from a famous lord mayor of Plymouth, Isaac Foot. I was appointed his temporary ADC for the visit, and took the opportunity to ask his advice about my dilemma. To my surprise—we had all been brainwashed in those days into thinking the only thing that mattered was one's middle-class national duty—he said very crisply that only a fool would find it a dilemma. If I had a place at Oxford, *of course* I should go for that, not the Marines. Spurred by what Isaac Foot said, I applied at once.

My first year at Oxford I "read" both French and German. I liked my French tutors, did not like the German ones, and so dropped German . . . something I have regretted somewhat ever since. Despite grim experiences in the trenches and afterwards in the occupation army in Germany itself during the First World War, my own father was much more fond of German literature than French. That decision of mine did not please him. In a sense I was going against family (or Victorian) tradition in turning my back on Germany and German. But I am sure now, forty years later, that it was basically the right decision. I think it is much more useful for the future novelist—for any seeker after culture—to get to know the Latin side of Europe well, rather than the Teutonic and Nordic one. The Germans are too like the British, and the French so richly different. We need what we haven't got by nature.

I had student "love affairs" with various French writers, although some took years to take effect. I very much liked Montaigne, although I haven't read him for years now. He seems to me one of the sanest and intellectually most attractive Europeans who has ever lived and he set me on the course of humanism that I have followed ever since. We had at that time

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to spend a great deal of time on Old French, and used to rather groan about it linguistically; but there seeped into me eventually an affection for the early storytelling—for Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes and the rest, the fathers and mothers of the European novel. I also liked the French comedy, especially Molière and Marivaux—not Racine and Corneille, I'm afraid, and I liked the late nineteenth century poets, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Laforgue. I also particularly fell for that elegant, precise tradition of the *pensée*, the carefully framed apothegm and wisdom, something we've never really mastered in English—Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Chamfort, all the rest. That admiration ruined a book I wrote later, *The Aristos*. I learnt my lesson there. It is not only wines that won't travel between our two countries.

By and large, I have never had much enthusiasm for the classical side of the French tradition, whose apotheosis is, I suppose, Racine. Even at Oxford I seemed to get endlessly lost in the byways, things I should not—at least for exam purposes—have been reading. I have never been particularly interested in French contemporary literature. Though I love the language, I have never learned to speak it well, though I would claim I am quite a good reader of it. But that was, I think, the aim of the old Oxford at that time: to teach one to understand France and the French, not to speak the language currently and fluently. That for me remains a vital difference between proper university "French"—or any other foreign culture and language—and its language-school variation. They are, or should be, two different things. One is for human beings, the other for business people. I don't think modern educationists have ever understood that, at least in this country.

INTERVIEWER

But weren't the existentialist writers—Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir—important in fostering your bid for freedom from the rigid structures of your conservative background?

FOWLES

Those writers certainly came to us after the war as strange

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and exciting. I always liked Camus best. Sartre I often found hard to understand. I can remember giving up *L'Etre et le Néant* in a mixture of despair and disgust. It wasn't just a language problem, more a philosophical one, not knowing what he actually meant in real life. That applies to most of the gurus since. I don't recall having read Simone de Beauvoir then. I think the "influence" was partly from the endless amount of talk in Oxford about "the existentialists," "authenticity," being *engagé* and the rest, all the implicit condemnations of the bourgeois view of life, that affected me. It corresponded to feelings inside myself that I think would have emerged anyway, indeed had already emerged, if confusedly, but were certainly quickened by the existentialist writers.

Students of my work often make rather a lot of existentialism, a good deal more than I ever felt is true of myself. But that is a familiar feeling, for me, anyway. You are presented as something you never really were. Of course it's flattering to be extensively studied; but I'm not altogether happy about the intensive pursuit of living writers that seems so popular now with literary students and teachers. I write for other reasons than providing fodder for the literary faculties.

INTERVIEWER

Did you read Jung? Could his influence be linked with the theme of psychological growth so apparent in the early novels?

FOWLES

I did dabble in him, from Oxford days and after. But not as a serious student might, much more as a dilettante, picking up the ideas I needed and that appealed to me rather as a spoilt child might pick out of a lucky dip if he or she were given free range and choice. For me Jung has always been the most fruitful psychologist, that is, most fertile in his effects on any subsequent fiction. I suspect a straight analyst, more or less in Freud's footsteps, would suit me better medically, if I ever needed such attention—which perhaps I do . . . like every other novelist!

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INTERVIEWER

You have said that you started writing *The Aristos* as a sort of student's notebook or "self-portrait in ideas" at this time. It seems an indispensable book for the serious student of your early fiction, *The Magus* and *The Collector.* Did it precede any extended effort to write fiction?

FOWLES

Like so many Oxford students, I developed very timid literary ambitions there. Such as they were, mine had far more to do with poetry than the novel. Poetry lasted as a long dream, long after I'd left university, of which the *Poems* that were published in 1973 were a funeral relic. I still occasionally get the urge to write poems, but usually sternly resist it. I didn't attempt fiction till the mid-1950s, and then not very seriously; it long remained a kind of second best, or *faute de mieux* to me. *The Aristos* I did begin in my last year at Oxford, 1949. I also began keeping a personal diary about that time. I am a great believer in diaries, if only in the sense that bar exercises are good for ballet dancers: it's often through personal diaries—however embarrassing they are to read now—that the novelist discovers his true bent—that he can narrate real events and distort them to please himself, describe character, observe other human beings, hypothesize, invent, all the rest. I think that is how I became a novelist, eventually. It's certainly how I tend to see my older books when I reread them, which is not at all often: that is, as a sort of past diary about myself. So that's how I felt and thought then. Not always a pleasant experience! *The Aristos* certainly preceded my novels, and yes, often bears heavily on them.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that you wanted to be known as a writer and not simply a novelist. You continue to make it difficult for us to separate the fiction and the nonfiction in your work. Is this a result of the early humanistic idealism—being a "renaissance man," a generalist, rather than a devotee in any single genre?

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FOWLES

I've always felt that expressing myself in other literary forms is natural *and* desirable. Or putting it most generally, that all novelists should live in two different worlds: a real one and an unreal one. That is perhaps why my taste in fiction is towards a fair degree of realism in style and my taste in non-fiction (say in what scientists and academics write) is towards those who can exhibit qualities like tolerance of hypothesis, dislike of the rigid interpretation, a general fluidity of attitude and a basic sympathy towards a subject . . . a touch of ordinary humanity, in a phrase.

Very important for me also is the collection of "old" books I have gathered over the years. I am a lousy bibliophile in the proper and normal sense. What I like about picking up old books is their enormous variety and the glimpses they can give into past and lost worlds and cultures. I do this quite indiscriminately, with whatever takes my fancy; the returns, in a literary sense, are infinite, but difficult to categorize. An American student to whom I mentioned this asked if she might have a list of what I had read or collected over the years. I told her it was impossible. I keep no such list. But this very miscellaneous reading I have done over the years has become a major influence for all its maddening vagueness for the students. Students nowadays seem to want to "place" precisely, to locate precisely, everything about a writer's work: what he is, what has made him or her what they are, and so on. It seems to me that to imprison it is to deny something very essential about writing. Rather the same thing has taken place in nature, or natural history—the mania to place everything in a precise species or sub-species, to discover exactly how it works, all the rest. I am opposed to the scientization of nature, the reducing of it all to species, ecological distributions, biochemical mechanisms, and so on. I feel this very strongly about writing and writers too. The world wants us caged, in one place, behind bars; it is very important we stay free.

INTERVIEWER

Like Forster, you have always distrusted Jamesian perfection

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of form, or at least you seemed to reject it as a worthy goal after the two early novels. Why?

FOWLES

I'm not quite sure what "perfection of form" means, unless it means obeying whatever "ideal form," that fickle thing, that the general educated taste, and in particular its leading determiners, the literary professors and serious critics and students, have decided their age must judge as "ideal." I dislike intensely the notion that a perfect form, like a sort of god, hovers over all of us, which we either cling or pay lip-service to. I think whatever form is chosen by each writer is "perfect" for him or her, however imperfect it may seem to those under the delusion of some general "perfect form" and its attainability. That sort of myth of a perfect form, applicable to all, seems to me one of those things modern art has sunk beyond resurrection. I certainly try to make the form I put things in suit their matter, but I agree totally with Forster that forcing that matter into some supposed general ideal of the form best suited to it is wrong. Novels in a sense are like new scientific theories. Of course there are ways in which they have to pay homage to the past, to high past standards; but they have also to disobey and question them, to break new ground. Nothing in their cultural pasts could have allowed for or predicted, say, *Tristram Shandy* or *Ulysses*.

INTERVIEWER

I meant to suggest that the two early novels are quite highly structured compared with the later ones. They're both allegories on power, aren't they? Both novels reach for the "living myth"—the archetypal and perennial confrontation of the "aristoi" with the "hoi polloi." They're set pieces, world-weary. Doesn't *The French Lieutenant's Woman* show a new openness in form and mark a real change in your conception of the novel and novelist?

FOWLES

They may be allegories on power, but I really don't think

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I saw them particularly so at the time. The younger novelist is really so excited by the powers he discovers he has—in part—that novels grow closer to love affairs—between novelist and subject—than to the sort of serious theme you're suggesting. This is perhaps why they come to you as world-weary set pieces; they were both written in a state of excitement! In a sense the young novelist finds himself in a gymnasium, with apparatus for set exercises, and wants to try his hand at some or all of them. I think it is only when he at last has mastered that side of it, that the real work, and the freedom we all fundamentally covet, become possible. Certainly I hope that in that way *The French Lieutenant's Woman* marks a real change and a new openness—what the Russians now call *glasnost*, transparency.

INTERVIEWER

You insist in these early works on the natural inequality of human beings, but at the same time you lean toward socialism. How do you reconcile your social egalitarianism with the rather snobbish idea of an "aristoi" or elite few set apart from the many?

FOWLES

This is something of an eternal torment, or split, in my life. The idea of an elite few is, of course, nowadays something no one likes to declare a belief in. On the other hand I am absolutely sure that it is a biological, if you like Darwinian, truth. So I am torn between this "cruel" but necessary truth: that some—perhaps most strikingly in the arts and sciences—are clearly better endowed or adapted than the others, and then by that other, kinder truth which asks equality and equal justice for society as a whole. In general I confess I much prefer the company of reasonably intelligent and educated people, but I still basically hold with the contention I made in *The Aristos*: that being "superior" in intelligence or education does not excuse an indifference to *hoi polloi*, the Cleggs and "fools" they have to live among. On the other hand, some of the recent calls for greater egalitarianism seem to me absurdly

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unreal. You can't legislate stupidity and ignorance out of existence, or deny they aren't evolutionary disadvantages. But perhaps we'd better not go into that!

INTERVIEWER

Have your work habits and methods changed or evolved since you wrote those early, idea-driven novels? In your "Notes on Writing a Novel," you say *The French Lieutenant's Woman* had its genesis in an image that simply welled up from the unconscious. Just how do you now proceed in the task of writing fiction?

FOWLES

I don't think my methods and habits have changed. When I do write fiction it is still much more by instinct and feeling than by some kind of theory. I am at the moment toying with the idea of a novel about French counterrevolution in La Vendée in the 1790s. That also has come to me by something very like an image. I may not do it, but what attracts me are these image-constituted kernels of a story. How shall I put it—they seem inherently rich, they promise all sorts of potentialities in how they might grow. What is rather terrifying at my age is the prospect of all the work you are setting for yourself by allowing such images to haunt the mind. That *has* changed. Some stories in the past one couldn't wait to get into; the energy needed, all the hard work, seemed nothing. Now it is frankly much more difficult. My last novel, *A Maggot—La Créature* in French—is currently having some success in France; it has just been chosen the best book of 1987. Marvelous, most writers think. But, perversely, I find it all rather depressing; men of sixty still expect to hurdle, or run marathons, as well as they did thirty years before!

INTERVIEWER

The visual image seems very important to you, as it was to D. H. Lawrence. You constantly refer to painters and painting in your fiction. When did this interest in art and art history arise in your career?

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FOWLES

I have no artistic ability whatever myself, but I do have a great fondness for the art of the past. I once said that if I weren't a novelist I would like to have been an artist. In a way I both envy and pity painters their general *inability* with writing and words. More practically, I think the countless wordless shortcuts the painters have to make to show *their* truths are of value to all writers. In semiological terms they have a whole vocabulary of signs totally beyond literature, obviously. A lot of very recent post-modernist art does not satisfy me. Upsetting tradition is justifiable; putting virtually nothing in its place is not.

INTERVIEWER

Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites seem to have special significance for you. Rossetti appears as a mentor or Magus for Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Isn't he also quite close in spirit to your painter, Breasley, in *The Ebony Tower*?

FOWLES

Yes, I am very fond of the Pre-Raphaelites. I was sent only the other day a copy of Holman Hunt's portrait of Rossetti as a young man, and felt a very sharp sense of almost personal identity with that; something about his slightly neurotic look. I certainly didn't link him with Breasley in *The Ebony Tower*—I had no clear model—but perhaps there was, as there so often is in fiction, some unconscious link with him.

INTERVIEWER

Breasley is very much against abstraction and makes negative and obscene puns on Picasso's very name. He insists that great art is not mental but arises instead from nature or fullness of being. You agree with that, don't you?

FOWLES

Well, yes, I am not altogether happy about some of the developments in very modern art. The great abstract artists, fine; but far too many of the lesser ones seem to me to use the

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abstract to hide their own lack of basic technique and of things like draughtsmanship. It does seem to me on occasion altogether too mental, too associated—especially in New York, I'm afraid—with notions of what is commercially viable or *chic* today rather than with the kind of more humanistic—and human-based—traditions from the past.

INTERVIEWER

But is your attitude essentially "romantic"? Drawing a portrait of the artist based on your fiction and various statements you have made, one forms a Rossetti-like image of a rather isolated, anima-driven man, dependent upon the "muse," or unconscious forces, somewhat self-destructive, and dreaming always of a saner and greener world than the contemporary reality.

FOWLES

Here we must differ. Everything I have learnt of other writers and most artists does constitute a portrait of the sort of figure for which you blame me—certainly the isolation, certainly being driven by largely unconscious forces, certainly having to rely on idealized images from the past. I think all the arts draw on a nostalgia or longing for a better world—at root a better metaphysical condition—than the one that is. Self-destructive, I don't know, but certainly we are all victims of some form of manic depression. That is the price of being what we are. I would never choose—even if I could!—to be a more "normal" human being; I would never choose something without that emotional cost, severe though it can become.

INTERVIEWER

Doesn't all this remind you of Hardy? You sometimes seem to merge with Hardy's Jude—a man with a vision of the humanist's New Jerusalem glowing on the horizon, as Christminister appeared to Jude. You remember he carved into the milestone, "Thither, J. F." This isn't really a fair comparison, I suppose, since you don't have his naive faith in social evolution.

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FOWLES

I think every writer, certainly from this part of the world, feels a bit of Hardy in him, but I wouldn't like to be compared personally to Jude the Obscure. I really can't altogether go with Hardy's general gloom and pessimism. I certainly have doubts about social evolution, especially today, and especially as so many politicians like to use the hope or promise of it in their speeches—too often merely because it's something people want to hear. By and large I retain a kind of optimism about the human condition, a belief that we will one day—even if always a later day than naive optimism expects—correct much of what is wrong in the world, or perhaps just what makes us believe it is wrong. Do I think that things will get better in any immediate future, no; that there is some kind of slow progress, despite countless wrong turnings, yes. I am working at the moment at an attempt to dramatize the debate over Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* at the British Association meeting at Oxford in 1860—in many ways perhaps the most important event of the whole century since it was when rational science began at last to cast off the shackles of obscurantist religion, when reason began to triumph over myth. Our present scientific world, which resulted from all that, has its faults and problems, of course, and perhaps the pendulum has swung too far. But I still can't feel, despite all the well-known intervening horrors and disasters, that the world hasn't progressed since the new reality Darwin and his followers introduced into life just over a century ago. Basically Hardy saw Darwinian theory as grist to his mill, or scientific backing for his gloom. I don't feel that. It seems to me to have represented a major clearing in the clouds over humanity.

INTERVIEWER

Granted your philosophical differences with Hardy, there does seem to be a psychological bond between you. In your essay, "Hardy and the Hag," you recognize his rather painful last novel, *The Well-Beloved*, as a precocious (pre-Freudian and pre-Jungian) fable on the power of the muse or the anima—the erotic—in the life of the writer. A more innocent

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perception of this connection is the mainstay in the life and work of another writer you have admired, Alain-Fournier. Bring in Rossetti and you have a psychological brotherhood. Isn't your *Mantissa* a sort of spoof on this link between the erotic and the creative impulses—a tribute to old Erato?

FOWLES

I certainly think the erotic was very important for Hardy. The avoiding any direct contact with it, or expression of it, the slipping around it, plays an enormous part in his novels. He was obviously a shy and repressed man. He liked the tryst, that first secret meeting or instinctual attraction between lovers, so much more than the fully physical side, what we should call the sex. I suppose I am the same, that is, haunted—both ravished and tormented—by the erotic; yet happiest when it is left three-quarters hidden, in secret. I spent a year of my life once writing an erotic novel—in common terms, a pornographic one. One day, when it was virtually complete, I took it and all its drafts into the garden and burnt the lot. It would no doubt have made me a great deal of money, and I was rather proud of it, for what it was. It was not prudishness that made me burn it, but much more a feeling of blasphemy, an error of bad taste. It broke that secret, bared the hidden part. That is why I dislike what I see as the unnecessary sexual explicitness in so much American fiction; it becomes infantile, destructive of the truly erotic, in the end.

Mantissa was meant to make fun of that, in part, and also of the poor novelists, like Hardy, Fournier, D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and countless others, laboring under this monstrous erotic succubus they have to carry on their backs. That and the money succubus—the idiot's illusion: "I must be a great writer because I make a lot of money"—are the two main danger points for the male writer.

INTERVIEWER

You have told visiting academics searching for "influences" to consider nature itself—as well as your long-standing interest

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in natural history and in conservation—as sources. The essential connection between nature and your art is explained, I think, in the most admirable of your non-fictional works, *The Tree*. I refer to that perfect essay you wrote to accompany the photographs in that volume. Would you care to clarify and elaborate?

FOWLES

Thank you for liking *The Tree*. I am most happy at having written that. This relation, between man and nature, is far more important and real to me than that between man and God, even between man and other men. I also find it intensely pleasurable, endlessly rich. Men often bore, books often bore, all things human can bore; nature, never. I once had to be in a jury at the Old Bailey, London's principal criminal court. We had to listen to a series of very unpleasant cases, involving child abuse, incest, all the rest. I was left afterwards standing outside the court with my jury fee. I decided to go to the nearest bookshop and buy the title remotest from anything human that I could find. I bought the then standard work on British spiders, about which I knew nothing. Now, many years later, after endless peering down a microscope, I still know nothing scientific about spiders—that is, I can still not identify them safely. But at least I have glimpsed and spent many hours in their strangely complex and beautiful world.

For many years, and with rather more success, I have pursued wild orchids all over Europe and—through someone's kind gift of Luer's books—in imagination as well, all over the United States. When I was in a hospital bed just after having had a stroke recently, I was near weeping with self-rage and self-pity, reciting a mantra to myself: *tenthredinifera, tenthredinifera, tenthredinifera* . . . that unpronounceable name belongs to one of the most beautiful *Ophrys*, or bee orchids, of Europe. I had come upon it on a Cretan mountain the previous spring; and I was saying that name like a mantra because I thought I should never climb that remote mountain again. Nature regularly brings tears into my eyes; humans very, very seldom.

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INTERVIEWER

Academic critics have questioned you again and again about literary influences, but of course there have been other influences. What people have impressed you? And what about the impact of your travels—France, Greece, America?

FOWLES

Very few people, I am afraid, have influenced me. I say "I am afraid " because I think one's indifference, deep down, to most other human beings is not something to be proud of; it is a form of hopelessness. Increasingly, as I grow older, I try to justify this, and perhaps do, in part, by man's bestial treatment of nature and his overwhelmingly selfish stupidity, his letting himself proliferate to such an insane degree. There are just too many of us these days. We have a dialect expression here in the West of England—the grockles. A grockle is someone ugly, but necessary: a visitor, a tourist, a foreigner. It is not just here in Dorset, but all over the world: the grockles begin to ruin everything.

Places touch me, move me, far more. If I am lucky, *now*, in the present, visiting; but these days it seems more and more in memory they move me, what they *were* like. There is a beach on Spetsai in Greece I describe in *The Magus*. Later visitors have told me how the grockles have completely spoilt it. But I can still remember it as it once was. I do not need my own words. Words are clumsy things. In my mind I can return earlier, to the first place, my first experience, as perhaps Adam could recall lost Eden. I remember equally a site in New Mexico, that I also wrote about; and the first American woods I walked through, in Massachusetts, entrancingly new to me and strange, though it showed nothing but the commonest species.

INTERVIEWER

Orwell wrote his late books in behalf of "democratic socialism"; you write in behalf of "freedom." Apparently you mean that the individual must free himself from conventions. We must escape from the "ebony tower" of our conventional lives. Is that the key idea?

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FOWLES

I have just written a conservation piece in which I suggest—not altogether humorously—that man's nearest relative is not the ape, but the sheep. I was brought up in an intensely conventional suburb not far from London by, in social terms, conventional parents. I have tried to escape ever since, and have admired the unconventional, the breakers of rules. Though often timid about that myself.

INTERVIEWER

Many of your novels are "timescapes," as they have been called, but *Daniel Martin* stands out as a venture into contemporary realism. Like Dan, you did live in Los Angeles for a while and worked on films.

FOWLES

Daniel Martin is certainly closer to me, or my own life, than the other books. Yes, I did briefly experience Los Angeles when William Wyler was getting ready to make *The Collector.* I enjoyed that, though I loathed Los Angeles and the vulgar tinsel of the film world. I wrote an account of it, very safely unpublishable for libel reasons.

I have a kind of love-hate relationship with the cinema. I admire it at its best, as an art, but I am increasingly hostile to the way it has invaded literature. I hate the way some silly people (often those who think themselves intellectuals) suppose we writers can know no greater glory than to have been filmed; almost as if we would never have written in the first place but for the prospect of being translated into the cinema. A year to two years ago my Chinese translator wrote and asked me if he could ask me a very important literary question, which all his Chinese readers would like answered. I agreed; there then came this very important literary question—what was Meryl Streep really like? I did not, and will not, answer, not because I in the least despised or disliked Meryl in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*—she made a very good effort at a very difficult, for an American, part—but because the Chinese were showing themselves just as foolish as the Americans and the British, totally under the tyranny of the fashionable

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art form, of the visual. Something in the cinema and television wants to usurp the novel totally. It will fail, I believe; in any case these visual arts will receive no help from me in their encroachment on my own art.

INTERVIEWER

There aren't many heroes in your novels. Well, in *A Maggot* there is Lord B. who certainly qualifies, but he turns out to be a transient incarnation of qualities found only in a better world than ours. On the other hand, every novel provides a heroine. You give women most of the virtues and you imply that our time—contrary to the public myth sustained by scientific achievement—is anything but a "heroic age."

FOWLES

I am certainly not a feminist in the militant sense, and I'm sure many such contemporary feminists would disown me. I have great sympathy for the general feminine principle in life. I find very little "heroic" about most men, and think that quality is far more likely to appear among women in ordinary, non-literary life. That ours is in general a heroic age seems to me ridiculous. We are near stifling and exterminating our planet. What scientific and technological advances we have made are flagrantly not paralleled by any moral or ethical ones. By and large men are never moral; they always let themselves be pressured into the amoral or the immoral. In terms of history men have failed; it is time we tried Eve.

INTERVIEWER

You have often said you admire Golding. Is it partly because he is so well-read in scientific literature and so often attacks the myth of "objective science"? Certainly Golding would approve your book on Stonehenge for this very reason.

FOWLES

I've long liked Golding's work. Though I have met him, I hardly know him personally. Without agreeing all the way, I have a general sympathy with what I take him to be doing.

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The piece I wrote for the volume in tribute to him on his 75th birthday ["Golding and Golding" in *William Golding: The Man and His Books* (1986)] tries to say that. I've just reviewed the last of his sea trilogy. It shows marvelous gusto in a man of his age. Thank God someone still knows what the novel is about.

INTERVIEWER

What other contemporaries, or near contemporaries, have impressed you or directly influenced your own writing?

FOWLES

None—or rather, too ephemerally for me to feel happy about talking of influence. At the moment I am for instance reading—and enjoying—a proof of Sybille Bedford's new novel, *Jigsaw*. I very much like her general attitude to life, her Europeanism, her slightly watercolorish writing technique, those seemingly haphazard, Dufy-like little dabs of description. She would very well answer my general notion of "a humanist." But I could not quite call this an influence. As I suspect happens with most writers and over most literature, she simply helps constitute a general tenor, or climate, that I like. I think baldly asking for specific names is really a much too clumsy—perhaps a masculine—way of probing a very vague, delicate and obscure process.

INTERVIEWER

You say you feel time is running out. If you must abandon certain possibilities and projects in favor of others, what criteria come into play in making that decision?

FOWLES

As we both know, this has been, through my fault, a very prolonged interview. During its midstream, early in 1988, I had a mild stroke—medically, "a transient ischaemic episode." It did not, and still does not, seem the transient episode the doctors would make it, but something much more life-altering. At one moment an eminent neurologist happened to

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lightly remark to me that of course I would have lost my writing ability. I was used to other people's indifference, but thought this a damned sight too much. He knew who I was, and I found his light insouciance monstrous. I was in complete error. What he had been talking of was "*righting* ability," the power to look to one side yet still to keep one's balance as one walks on—a faculty I had never before even realized I had—and which I have indeed partly lost. On bad days I go down the street like a wino, canoning from side to side.

It seems I was lucky, really. My memory was affected a little, but seems to be returning. I can still enjoy reading, I feel I can still judge books. What escapes me is composing fiction. The two main writing blocks are these. Firstly finding myself starved of alternatives. In the pre-stroke days my mind seemed automatically, and quite unconsciously, to offer ten ways of saying something. Now I am hard put to think of more than one, and that often not one I like. I never before realized I had this totally unconscious verbal dexterity; and that not having it is salutary, is reducing me to the common state of most people: "This is why I've been so lucky, this is why *they* can't write novels."

The other bar to writing is less mysterious. It is something like abulia, loss of will, indecision; but not quite. It seems more like a loss of vanity, a not really caring what I write or have written—even worse, what *anyone* writes or has written. In short, I have lost all conventional faith or belief in books, in "literature," most of that superstructure of self-regard most writers have to erect between themselves and the outside world. Only the old and very successful can throw that superstructure away; and even then, often don't.

This new slowness, the intellectual equivalent of my new physical clumsiness, this doubt of "the worth of the game," have largely kept me from serious writing during this last year. I certainly don't feel barren, bereft of ideas, just of the ability to put them into practice. Nor is it basically a question of help, human or mechanical. The individual mind is just something no other mind or a word-processor can replace.

This stroke has made me feel time is running out; in other

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words, much more aware of death, my own and that of the one other human being I love most—and whose ghost, in one form or another, has lain close behind all those female heroines we mentioned earlier. I can imagine my own real death, but not that of Elizabeth, my wife. The one thing I try to keep writing, as I have during nearly all my adult life, is my diary. You wonder, at times, what it is all worth, the maundering on about countless things that other people will have forgotten. Yet something drives one on; man—and woman—is profoundly self-reflexive.

Years ago in *The Aristos* I suggested death itself was like a loved wife, a vital and essential part of me. Still today I wouldn't alter any of that part of the book. I stay an atheist, a totally unreligious man, with a deep, deep conviction that there is no after-life. But I wrote it a little as one who writes things in novels: imagining them, not knowing them. Now the rough seas begin, and *Timor mortis*, though I despise it, *conturbat me*.

—**James R. Baker**

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The Middle of Everything

Peter Cameron

Two days before his show opened, Jack arrived at his hotel in New York to find a telegram from his grandmother. He was not alarmed. His grandmother believed telegrams were the most civilized form of communication. This telegram, like all of hers, was succinct. It read: "Welcome New York. Awaiting your call." It was signed Mrs. Enid Winns Carter.

In his hotel room Jack was overcome with the paralysis he always felt upon arriving in New York. Lately he had made his home in Mexico, and occasionally, Los Angeles. He hadn't lived in New York City for about four years. He never knew where to begin in New York. He always felt like he was coming in at the middle of everything.

He decided to begin by calling his grandmother. The phone barely rang once before she answered it. "Hello Grandma," Jack said.

"Hello," she said. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," he said. "A little jet-lagged."

"Who is this?" she asked. Mrs. Carter liked to act confused on the telephone. It was her least favorite form of communication.

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"This is Jack," Jack said. Since he was her only grandchild, there could be little doubt as to his identity.

"Jack?"

"John," he said. "Your grandson."

"Oh, John!" she exclaimed. "It doesn't sound like you. Did you get my telegram?"

"Yes," he said. "How did you know where I'm staying?"

"Because you always stay at the same hotel. That horrible place downtown." He was staying at the Chelsea. A couple years ago his grandmother had come into town to have lunch with him and had taken a taxi to the Chelsea. She refused to get out because she claimed 23rd Street looked like a circus. She took the taxi back up to the Sherry Netherland, where she summoned him for a "civilized" lunch. Now Mrs. Carter avoided the city entirely.

"Can I expect you for dinner?" she continued.

"I should really check in at the gallery," he said.

"Couldn't you do that tomorrow?"

"I suppose," Jack said, who was none too eager to confront his paintings. They always looked inexplicably different and invariably worse in New York. "What time are the trains?" he asked. His grandmother lived in Bedford.

"I don't know," she said. "I haven't taken a train in ages. Why don't you call the train people? That's what they are for."

"I see you insist on looking like a field hand," Mrs. Enid Winns Carter said in way of a greeting. She was standing in the front hall, supported by a cane.

"You can't help getting at least a little tan when you live in Mexico," Jack said.

"Yes, but you could help living in Mexico." Mrs. Carter disapproved of North Americans living in foreign parts. She believed everyone should live where they were born. She had lived in the same house in Bedford since the 1920s. It was a large brick house with many rooms and much furniture. She led Jack, rather slowly, into the living room.

"Where is Aunt Helen?" he asked. His Aunt Helen, who

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was really his grandmother's cousin, had lived with his grandmother for the last three years.

"Mrs. Whitcomb is drying out," his grandmother said. She always referred to Helen as Mrs. Whitcomb.

"Drying out?"

"She's at that clinic where you have to make your own bed. In California." She pronounced California with five syllables.

"I didn't know she had a drinking problem," Jack said.

"Of course she has," his grandmother said. "What do you think she has been devoted to all these years?"

"Nothing, I suppose," he said.

"Wrong," Mrs. Carter said. "She has been devoted to the bottle. And I don't understand her sudden urge to hop on the wagon. It seems a little late in the game."

"Better late than never," Jack said.

His grandmother snorted.

"How long will Helen be away?" Jack asked. He was worried about his grandmother living alone. She was eighty-six.

Mrs. Carter waved her hand. "Enough of Mrs. Whitcomb," she said. "I want to hear about you. Tell me about your show. Are the paintings big and ugly?"

"They're somewhat smaller than usual," he said.

"But just as ugly?"

"You would think so," Jack said.

She smiled. "I still hope that before I die, you will paint me a nice picture. Would you begrudge me that?"

"I gave you the pick of the last show."

"No. I'm not interested in ugly paintings. I want a painting *of* something. I know that makes me hopelessly old-fashioned, but so be it. You know what I would most like? A painting of the house at Benders Bay. Surely you could paint that for me? After all your education and training which I hasten to remind you I financed."

"I'll pay you back."

"Pay me with a painting of Benders Bay." Benders Bay was the house his grandmother once owned on Fishers Island. "I have a photograph of it, if you have forgotten what it looks like."

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"I don't paint from photographs," Jack said.

"Then you could go out there and paint it. I wonder if it's still there. Perhaps it's been torn down."

"I doubt it," Jack said.

"Yet it's somebody else's now," his grandmother said. "Anyway," she continued, "I would like you to paint me something before I die."

"I'll go up to Fishers next week and paint you the house," he said.

"That makes me very happy," she said. "You have no idea."

Jack's grandfather built Benders Bay as a wedding present for his wife. They went there every summer from 1923 to 1970, the year Jack's grandfather died. Jack spent the summers there with them. His father worked in the city and his mother, a beautiful and talented actress, was usually in a show. She worked very steadily on Broadway during the forties and fifties. When Jack was fifteen she killed herself.

The summer weeks at Benders Bay always followed the same pattern: on Sunday, after the matinee, Jack's parents would arrive. His mother would bring an entourage—people from the cast, or other friends—and the house would be filled with exotic, glamorous adults, with noise and music and cigarette smoke, with dancing and charades, and drunk people running down to the water in the middle of the night, and reappearing, fully clothed, sopping wet, to dance some more. On Tuesday afternoon they'd pack everything up and depart in a caravan of honking cars for Manhattan, and an 8:30 curtain, leaving the elder Carters and Jack behind. When his grandfather died it was revealed that he had several large debts, and his grandmother sold Benders to pay them. She never went back to Fishers Island.

Over dinner Mrs. Carter told Jack she was thinking of selling her accessories.

"What accessories?" he asked.

"Accessories," she said. "My gloves, and hats and jewels."

"Why are you going to sell them?"

"Why not?" his grandmother said. "Why keep them? Since

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you have disowned my great-grandchildren, there is no family to inherit them. And I am told there is an appreciative market for vintage accessories. I have spoken with several dealers."

"I haven't disowned the twins," Jack said. "I just don't have custody. There's a difference." Jack was the father of twin girls, Sigourney and Yvette. Shortly after they were born, he and his wife were divorced; Barbara immediately remarried, and his bitterness somehow poisoned his paternal love. He knew this was wrong, he knew that his feelings for these children should be separate from his feelings for their mother, but somehow it was all inextricably tangled, threads with many sharp needles, and he cast the whole net off and moved away.

"Call it what you will," Mrs. Carter said. "I never see them."

"Maybe I'm interested in your accessories."

"Why would you be interested in them?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I'll remarry. There's no need to sell them. You don't need the money."

"Are you contemplating remarriage?"

"No," he said.

"There is no one in your life?"

A vision of Langley, his lover, drying her hair with a white towel beside the aqua swimming pool, presented itself to him. He smiled. Why did he not want to tell his grandmother about Langley? It was probably her age—an unacceptable twenty-three—but he liked the fact that Langley was a secret, that she was unofficial, that she existed only in the palmy air of, as his grandmother would say, Californeea. "No one," he said, but the vision lingered.

"That is too bad. I wish you were in love. You are always a nicer person when you are in love."

"Isn't everyone?" he asked.

"No," said Mrs. Carter. "Love makes some of us villains. Come upstairs. I will show you my treasures. Whatever you want, you can take. The rest I will sell."

He followed his grandmother out of the dining room and into the front hall. Mrs. Carter had installed an elevator chair along the bannister, which was long and curved. She sat down and buckled a seat belt. "It won't go unless this is fastened,"

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she explained. "Stupid thing." She pressed a button and the chair began to rise. Jack climbed the stairs next to her, one step at a time, trying to match her slow ascent. "For heaven's sake, walk normally," she said. "I'll meet you at the top."

In the second floor landing, he looked down and watched his grandmother rise. She was facing away from him, travelling backward, her hands clasped in her lap, her head bowed. That afternoon when he had driven her into town to buy groceries, she sat the same way. Her loss of mobility was, in her eyes, a loss of dignity. The chair curved around and arrived at the top of the stairs; she unbuckled the belt and the chair tilted forward, depositing her next to him.

"This way," she said, all business in an attempt to transcend her humiliation. Jack followed her down the hall into her bedroom, then into her dressing room. She approached a large armoire that was either made of ash or pecan: some golden wood that was so highly polished they were both reflected in its grain. It was dusk, and an imported, antique light filled the room. "Damn it," she said. "I forgot the keys. They're downstairs."

"Where are they? I'll get them."

"They're in my bag, in the front hall, on the credenza."

"I'll be right back."

When he returned with the ring of keys, his grandmother was sitting in an easy chair by the window. She held out her hand.

"Why do you keep it locked?" Jack asked.

"I keep everything locked," Mrs. Carter said. She flipped through the keys and found the one for the armoire. "Voilà," she said, handing it to him.

He opened the armoire. Inside its doors were beveled mirrors that were mottled with green, moss-like fog. One half of the space was a closet of dresses sheathed in plastic bags. Sequins glinted, incandescent as crows' wings, in the darkness. The other half contained drawers of varying sizes. He opened one and found a stash of scarves, an unmade bed of color, glossy silk, and lace. He felt his grandmother watching his back. The next drawer contained a jumble of gloves, an orgy

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of hands, gloves of every length and color, gloves with gauntlets, gloves with pearls and flowers and monograms embroidered on them. "Where did you get all this stuff?" he asked.

She snorted. "There was a time when people bought fine things and kept them."

He slid open a thin drawer. On a field of red velvet an army of brooches and earrings were pinned, all of them set with stones glittering in unembarrassed colors. "Are these real?" he asked.

Mrs. Carter didn't answer. She sat with a blank look on her face.

Jack closed the drawer. "Are you tired?" he asked.

She shook her head no. "I am thinking about your daughters," she said, looking out the window at the sun's disappearance.

"Oh," Jack said.

"Do they know they have a great-grandmother?"

"I don't think they remember you," he said.

"Of course they don't remember me. They haven't seen me since they were babies. My question was, do they know of me?"

"I think I've mentioned you," he said.

"Mentioned me? How generous of you."

"They are not a part of my life," Jack said.

"So you have disowned them." Mrs. Carter looked at him.

"No," he said. "You don't understand."

"Of course I don't understand. Your behavior is incomprehensible."

"They have a new father. I try not to interfere."

"How very gallant of you."

Jack closed the armoire and locked it. He played with the keys. They were old keys, made of iron. He wondered what else they opened. "I'm sorry," he said. "I wish things were different. I wish I were different."

For a moment neither of them said anything. Mrs. Carter looked back out the window. "I had to have the elm tree cut down," she said. "The town insisted on it. They said it was jeopardizing the electrical wires."

"That's a shame," Jack said.

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She shrugged her thin shoulders. "They did a very neat job of it. All in a day."

"I didn't notice it was gone," said Jack.

"It's getting dark," said Mrs. Carter. "Turn on the light."

Jack's show was at the Winterburn Gallery, which was owned by a woman named Olivia de Havilland. She claimed this was her real name, and Jack saw no reason to doubt her, since there were a number of other very odd things about her that were true. He spent an exhausting day hanging the show with her. She had the unfortunate idea that some of the canvasses should be hung very high, and some very low, thus creating, in her words, "a dynamic viewing experience."

Although Jack had sent an invitation to his ex-wife, he was surprised to see her. They usually avoided one another. But about half-way through the evening, Barbara entered the gallery, trailing a twin by either arm. The twins were dressed in brightly colored jogging suits; Barbara was wearing a leather dress. She ignored the paintings and made straight for Jack, cutting a swath through the crowd. "Greetings," she said, kissing the air beside his cheek. She indicated the twins and said, "*les enfants*," as though they were some exotic delicacy.

Jack didn't know what to do. He felt under-rehearsed. He was aware that everyone was watching him and that he was making a poor show. One of the twins—he had no idea which—clutched his leg. He reached down and patted her on the head. She looked up at him.

"Which one?" he said.

"Sigourney," Barbara said. "See Daddy's paintings," she said to the child. "Daddy painted these."

Sigourney studied a canvas, which thanks to Olivia de Havilland, was hung at her eye level. "I can do better than that," she said.

There was much tense laughter, followed by tense silence. Jack turned to Barbara. "How about dinner when this is over?" he asked.

"What's up?" asked Barbara.

"Nothing," said Jack. "I just thought it might be nice."

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"With or without?" asked Barbara.

"With or without what?"

"*Les enfants*," said Barbara.

"Oh," said Jack. "With."

"If I'd known, I'd have brought the dog," Barbara said.

Barbara suggested a restaurant called Cafe Wisteria in Tribeca. The twins devoured a plate of cornichons and radishes and disappeared beneath the table. For a while Jack and Barbara concentrated on the food, and listened to the murmurings at their feet. Barbara was the most relaxed person Jack had ever met. Nothing seemed to faze her. It drove him crazy. Everyone she knew thought that she was addicted to valium, but Jack knew for a fact that she wasn't. She just inhabited her life disinterestedly.

"How is Roger?" Jack asked. Roger was Barbara's new—well, not new anymore; second—husband.

"Roger's fine. He's in Madrid at the moment. We're buying a house there."

"In Spain?"

"Outside of Barcelona."

"Why?"

"Why?" she repeated, as if she had never considered the question. "I don't know. No reason, really. We plan to spend half the year there."

"Oh," Jack said. "You'll take the twins?"

"They're a little young to fend for themselves."

"Of course," said Jack. "I just meant . . ."

"What?"

"I don't know. What will they do in Spain?"

"Learn Spanish, I hope. I don't know. What do they do in New York: Play. Grow up. Don't tell me you're developing an interest in them?"

Jack said nothing. A small hand was rolling his sock up and down his ankle. "Actually," he said, "I have been thinking about them. I was wondering if I could take them to visit my grandmother."

"How is she doing?"

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"Well. She'd like to see the twins."

Barbara raised the tablecloth and addressed the floor. "Honies," she said, "would you like to go visit your great-grandma? Jack wants to take you to Bedford."

"Where's Bedford?" a twin asked.

"Not far," said Barbara. "In the country. You get there on a train."

"Are there cows?"

"No, it's not a farm."

"Is there a trampoline?"

"No. Just a big house with your great-grandma, who wants to see you very much. And Jack will take you. Wouldn't that be fun?"

"Who's Jack?"

"You know Jack. Your father. Not Daddy, but your father."

Jack leaned his head down and looked under the table. "It's me," he said. "I'm Jack." The twins looked up at him, with identical, confused expressions on their small perfect faces. "I'm Jack," he said again, and reached his hand down toward them, tentatively, as if to wild dogs.

At the hotel there was a message for him to call Langley Smith. Langley had originally been Jack's student, when he taught painting and lectured on modern art for one ill-fated semester at Bryn Mawr immediately following his exodus from New York. He had met her again, last year, at the opening of a show of his in Los Angeles. By then she had switched from art to acting. Her biggest claim to fame was as a guest star on "L.A. Law," playing a woman unjustly accused of child molestation.

"Hi baby," Langley said. "How did it go?"

"Not bad," Jack said. "Julian Arnotti bought the two big ones."

"Great," she said.

"How are you doing?" Jack asked.

"Not bad. I was called back again for the part in that pilot."

"What pilot?"

"The one for Lorimar. About the American family in Russia.

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You know, the dum-dum Daddy's an ambassador, the ditzy mother's an alkie, there are kids and a dog and a lot of funny commies."

"Who are you?"

"The daughter, if you can believe it. I'm a nympho with a thing for Russkies in uniforms."

"That's great. And you got it?"

"Yes. Unless they decide to make the family black. As you know, black is very popular out here now. They're negotiating with Richard Pryor, and if he says yes, then it will be black. But I doubt he will."

"Maybe you could be an adopted daughter. That would be interesting."

"I'll suggest it. So when are you coming back?"

"I don't know. In about a week. I'm a little worried about my grandmother."

"Why?"

"Well, my aunt who usually stays with her is drying out at Betty Ford. I don't think she should be living alone."

"Can't you get someone to stay with her? A nurse or someone?"

"I guess so. I'll have to look into it."

"If this Russkie thing falls through maybe I'll fly out. It would be fun to spend some time in New York together."

"I don't know," he said. "I'm kind of preoccupied."

"You must be tired," Langley said. "What time is it there?"

"One o'clock."

"You want to go to bed?"

"Yes," he said.

"Okay, then. We'll talk later?"

"Sure," he said. "Listen, good luck with the thing. The pilot."

"Thanks," she said. "I'll let you know if I get it."

"Well, goodnight."

"Goodnight," Langley said. "I love you."

Jack hung up quickly, hoping his failure to respond to her declaration had gone unnoticed. But of course he knew it had not. And he had some idea of how Langley must feel: Langley,

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in her bedroom, the TV invariably on, the sprinkler spraying the window; Langley in bed in her Tina the Killer Whale T-shirt, having said I love you to the miles between them, to the darkness, to his inevitable silence. She was better and braver than him, he understood that, but what he did not understand was why she tolerated his constipated dumb love, which he could only express when they lay down together and allowed their bodies to speak. He redialed the number of her house in Topanga Canyon. "Hello," he said. "C'est moi."

"Bonjour moi," Langley said. "What's up?"

"Nothing."

"Oh," said Langley.

"I miss you," he said, after a pause.

"I miss you, too," Langley answered.

"I'm a little drunk," he said.

"Go to bed," suggested Langley. "Sleep it off."

"I wish you were here," he said.

"So do I," said Langley.

"I really wish you were here," he said. "Really."

"I love you," said Langley.

He didn't answer. He just sat on his bed, the drapes drawn, the traffic in the street, the phone pressed to his ear.

"Sleep well," Langley said, and hung up.

While his grandmother and the twins had a tea party in the gazebo, Jack mowed the lawn. The gardener was in the hospital. Although he couldn't hear their conversation, which was obscured by the roar of the mower, he could tell they were having fun. Every time he trudged past the gazebo they all three waved at him. His grandmother raised her teacup in salute.

The party was still in progress when he finished but before he could join it his grandmother told him to shower and change his clothes. Jack still had clothes in the house, which he and his father had lived in from the time his mother had died till the time he went to college. His father died five years ago, of a heart attack while swimming in Long Island Sound.

Except to keep them clean, his grandmother had touched nothing in their bedrooms. His was the same as the day he left

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for college and his father's was the same as the day he went for his swim. Jack took a shower in the bathroom they had shared. There was still a bottle of his father's cologne in the medicine chest. He smelled it and then tentatively put some on his skin, but he didn't smell like his father. He stood naked in the cool bathroom and looked out across the lawn at his grandmother and his daughters in the backyard. They were putting on a show for one another. His grandmother stood up and sang "Getting to Know You." Then the twins performed a sort of tap dance, but without tap shoes or music it was rather thumpy and chaotic.

Jack watched from inside the house, like a voyeur.

He called his grandmother the next day. The phone rang and rang, unanswered. Fearing the worst, he took the first train to Bedford. The front door was unlocked. The shades in the living room were all drawn and the house was dark. His grandmother lay on the sofa. She sat up as he entered the room.

"Who is it?" she asked, feeling on the coffee table for her glasses.

"It's me," he said, "John."

"Haven't you heard of knocking?" she asked.

"I thought something had happened to you," he said. "I tried to call you and there was no answer. I thought you were dead."

"Not quite dead," she said. "Just napping."

"Jesus," he said. He opened the curtains.

"Close them," she said. "I'm trying to keep the house cool."

He closed the drapes and sat down beside her on the couch. He realized he was panting and tried to catch his breath. He was sweating too. "Have you heard from Aunt Helen?" he finally asked. "When is she coming back?"

"Not for a while. Apparently she was moister than any one of us thought."

"Well, I'm worried about you being here alone," Jack said. "I'm planning to go back home, and I don't like it that you're here alone."

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"Actually," his grandmother said, "I was thinking about getting a chimpanzee."

"What?" he asked.

"A chimpanzee. For a companion. I've read they make wonderful companions. They're very intelligent, you know, and clean."

"Isn't it against the law to own wild animals?"

"Apparently not chimpanzees. Michael Jackson has one."

"I can't believe we're talking about monkeys. You aren't serious about this, are you?"

"Of course I am serious."

"I think it's sick. It's macabre. It's like Nora Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*."

"Nor*ma* Desmond."

"Whatever."

"What about your promise?" Mrs. Carter asked.

"What?"

"I am changing the subject. You promised to paint me a picture of Benders Bay. I don't suppose you have."

Jack had forgotten all about the painting. "Oh," he said.

"You forgot? I thought so."

"I didn't forget. I just haven't had time. I've been very busy."

"Of course," she said.

"I'll go up this week," he said. "Before I go back."

Mrs. Carter leaned forward and kissed him. "It was very sweet of you to rush out here. I'm sorry I unplugged the phone. I should have told you. I keep it unplugged unless I want to make a call or expect one."

"What if someone has to get in touch with you?"

"They can send a telegram. That is what telegrams are for."

"Telegrams are delivered over the phone."

"What happened to the little men on bicycles?"

"I don't know. They all died."

This news momentarily silenced Mrs. Carter.

"Well, that's a shame," she finally said. "A damn shame." She stood up. "Come," she said. "It's lunchtime. Are you hungry?"

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That night he called Langley. He explained about the painting, telling her he wasn't sure when he'd be back.

"That's very sweet of you, to do a painting for your grandmother," she said.

Jack let her think that. It was the second time that day someone had told him he was sweet, yet he felt less than sweet.

"Did you get the part?" he asked.

"No," she said. "They're changing it from a sitcom to an espionage thing. The ambassador's children are all spies, or something, and they don't think I'm right for a spy. They think my face is too honest."

"That's a shame," he said.

"That's the breaks," Langley said.

"Listen," he said. "Why don't you fly out here? And we'll go out to Fishers together? We can stay a couple of days."

"I don't think so," said Langley.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I'm just, you know, going through a lot of stuff right now, and I want to get it sorted out."

"What stuff?"

"Just stuff. Life stuff, work stuff." She paused. "Love stuff."

"About me?"

"Bingo," Langley said.

"What's the problem?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Langley. "I don't even know that there's a problem. I'm just thinking about it."

"Well, can't you think about it on Fishers Island?"

"Baby, listen, call me when you get back to L.A. We'll talk about it then."

"You don't think we should talk about it now?"

"No. Have fun. Paint well."

"Wait," he said. "Don't hang up."

"What?" said Langley.

"Listen," he said.

"I'm listening," Langley said.

"I don't want to lose you," he said.

Langley didn't say anything.

"I don't want to lose you," he repeated.

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"That's funny," Langley said.

"Why?"

Langley made a small noise that could either have been the beginning of a laugh or a sob.

"What's funny?" he asked.

"Nothing, really."

"Have I already lost you?"

"Maybe," Langley said. "A little."

"Listen, I'll come back tomorrow. I can paint the house later this summer."

"No," said Langley. "Paint it now. I told you I have stuff to think about. It's O.K. I'll be here when you come back."

"Well, don't think about anything till I get there."

"I'm a smart girl," Langley said. "I can't promise you that."

The next day, Jack took a train to New London and rented a car and rode the ferry over to Fishers Island. He drove out to Benders Bay and parked at the end of the long sandy driveway, and looked up at the house, which stood on a bluff above the water. It had not been changed. The lilacs were blooming. There was a strong breeze from the sea and it blew some lavender petals across the windshield. Jack closed his eyes. He could smell the lilacs and the salt water and the heat. He remembered a time when he and his grandmother had been playing Scrabble on the terrace. He could remember the same fragrant hot wind, and how every now and then they would have to lean forward, shelter the board, place their hands over the intricately arranged tiles, so that their words would not blow away.

He got out of the car and assembled his easel and supplies at a point in the road where the house was best silhouetted against the sky. As he began drawing, a woman appeared on the terrace and looked at him curiously. She began to walk down the driveway, and Jack thought of the questions she was bound to ask him—Who are you? What are you doing here? Why are you painting this house? He paused in his drawing, and tried to think of some answers.

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Two Poems by J. D. McClatchy

The Rented House

The faintly digital click of the overhead fan
stroking what was left of the dark
had finally given way to a rooster alarm.
Not that we needed one.

We'd been kept awake all night by cats, cats
in the crawlspace, in the yard,
up and down the back lane, until it seemed
they were in your head,

their guttural chittering, then a courting sound—
more like tires spinning on ice—
a sort of erotic simmer that would mount
to a wail in heat, a wailing,

one pair, and soon after another, the same,
sex shrieking all around and under us,
who hadn't touched, or barely spoken, for days.
When I leaned over you

to bang on the window, your back was hot on my chest.
I banged louder, longer, less to scare
the cats away than to feel your heat, the flesh
and an inch above the flesh,

while listening to theirs, though theirs hurt less
because the pain thrilled, you could hear it,
the now worried tom helplessly caught in her
until she'd had enough.

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And then they set to fighting. Again and again
I'd be getting out of bed to stamp or shout
into the dark, and they would stop for a minute
before turning on each other

with a threatening sigh-long cough. No point, no use
trying to silence it. And the losers,
self-pitying, moved off further under the house,
making a curious new sound,

a wounded coo and some hen-gabble (Christ!
I should have known that rooster was a cat).
By morning we were all exhausted, trying to start
something or stop it,

giving it to another day, angry—but angry at what?
There on the porch, when I opened the screendoor,
a black, three-legged, pregnant cat was sitting,
our brooding household god,

last night's own story staring back at me in the slatted
early palmlight, all the accidents of envy and will
thrown together in one mangled, swollen creature,
mewling, limping, her stump

dangling down beneath her belly. When I took one,
then two hesitant steps toward her, she arched
and hobbled away, a petition against grace.
Sometimes a life speeds up,

as when we first met, whole months it seemed collapsed
to a night, an emptiness years-deep filled
and spilling over by dawn into—but first things first.
Some milk. A shallow bowl.

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By the time I'd returned with it, the cat had vanished.
But there beside the door, earlier overlooked,
you'd already set a milkbowl down for her yourself,
someone else's earthenware,

the glazed, coarse-grained gesture neither of us
can make for each other. Poor, stupid cat,
where are you? All day the bowls have sat there,
side by side, untouched.

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An Alphabet of Anger

A Greek once told the aged emperor Augustus
A maxim since proved advantageous
As well, of course, as just:

Before you turn your anger against a friend,
Be circumspect, recite the alphabet—
Backwards, if you must.

Call language, then, unpacked to its implements,
Cure of the chronic disease it had first
Caused. And so the mind,

Distracted by its fictions, may uncast that spell
Designed to flush the beast from a heart, may
Domesticate its kind.

Each cartoonish CAT and DOG then will have his day,
Eager to hiss or growl his letters out,
Eloquently inarticulate,

For all the world like a boy at the front of class,
Furious with both the bully and the self who has
Forgiven but can't forget.

Guards of the glorious revolution, bored when their
Guillotine rusts, will "oil it with your sister."
Groundlings can't pronounce

Her name, but applaud the girl's head on a pole.
Hector's mouth is full of great Achilles' wrath.
Heroin by the ounce

Is dealt to schoolkids in Harlem and Shaker Heights.
Implacable statistics stutter about
Infant mortality

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Just as starving tribesmen hold a body up to be
Judged by a photojournalist from *Time*.
Juntas, the Holy See,

Killer viruses with no cure, sadists, acid rain,
Know-it-all intellos who rant, the tape that jams—
Knots in a tangled rope

Leading back to the Unmoved Mover, and ahead to
Last night's sour, drunken complaints about
Love or money or both.

Moralists allow themselves one last high-minded straw,
Moved to forsake their golden mean by abstract,
Malignant objects of hate.

(Nemesis, dark namesake! the coiled dragon
Nodding over his treasure, his sad etcetera
No hero now awaits.)

Of all anger's outposts, a sullen contempt
Occasions, because it only looks down
On the faults we most fear,

Pity, except in its prey. Frail, coldhearted
Priggery, shivering on top of its column,
Protected by a sneer.

Qualms, quicksilver quibbles, quid pro quos,
Quixotic protests, pitches queered—all our
Quarrels with the world

Resolve to a trembling film on the soapbubble self.
Real anger, though, that breathes your breath,
Rage so fierce a word

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Startles this second life that lives inside you,
Schemes to strike back at the suffocating
Shadows over your bed.

The jilted lover one day pushes his mother down
Three flights of stairs. The hit man in a sweat
Takes aim at a figurehead.

Union organizers, imprisoned guerilla leaders,
Unhappy teenagers chain-smoking in their rooms
Until the noise below

(Voices squabbling, choked sobs, a slammed door,
Violent apologies) explodes in their guts—
Victims whom long ago

Writhing grievances engorged. The eloquence of some,
Words the ready scalpel of the weak-willed,
Whittles around what's sore.

Xerxes flogged the waves, though, and fanatics bomb
X-rated movie houses. Their anger scrawls its
X, speechless before

Yawning hells of self-pity that fire their revenge
Year after ruthless year. What help for them? But
You, whose chastened pique

Zeroes in on (confess it) nothing really, is no
Zealot's after all, having ticked off A to
Z, again now, speak.

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Donald Revell

The Season to Scale

A day too large for the summer, standing up
out of the bus lanes, puzzled on its face
like the miniaturist who becomes famous
in the corner of his garage and rises up
out of scraps and dolls' heads into loneliness
too big for his heart or for his fingers' ends.
Today is like that. Today I was discharged
from hospital with only a slight illness
and all the undirected passion of illness,
a poor still-life aspiring to the dark edge
and depth of landscape. Today is too large,
and my heart shrinks at the center of it.

On the wards, fact and truth wear the same gowns,
receive the same treatment at arm's length.
But outside, beyond the ziggurats and shallow
climates of the medical city, you
must tell them apart. You need to know
that one is the civil traffic of the hour,
the life and outwardness of the bus lanes,
and that the other is the nearly immobile
victim of each day and in particular
of the large days whose treetops and hidden
parklands spread across the city and sky
until you need no heart and your heart dies.

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Everyone, at a moment of good health,
finds a razor shadow of perfect celebration
between flower and leaf
between the sunlit facts
and truth's coronal grief
over the huge, sure end of celebration
in the next moment. That is the fun of health,

a joyous but cool, kind attention
to smallness, to the displaced parts of happiness
that survive as ghosts
inside the thinning shade,
as original facts
after the diaspora of attention
that is our aspiration to complete happiness,

that dark edge of landscape. Yet almost everyone
stays lucky. Health strays quickly into passion
where it is full summer
and each hot day larger
and so much easier
thanks to the untruthful bus service of passion.
The sheer scale of it could stop the heart in anyone.

The miniaturist returns gladly to obscurity,
a fool for size, but too crazy to be changed much.
I take large steps away from the hospital.
I am wearing the fresh, more modest and more
durable gown of a large day in summer
in a great city whose rapacious amenities
do the people's thinking and prescribe
their health and the heartlessness that will sustain them.
In my place in line at the bus stop
I feel a foolishness coming over me,
a passion for the big picture. The man next to me
suddenly brightens a little in a moment

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of heat lightning and then is like myself again:
undetailed, modest and aspiring
to landscapes already receding with the storm
that did not break. The plain facts of our lives
are like that. And the truth is where it rains
or a damp, immobile garden only a fool would leave.
I remember my first trip to Brooklyn.
I took a bus before dawn and then a subway.
When I came up into the light a bad storm
had already come and gone through the city. The plane trees
lay stripped and fallen. But the sky was clear blue.
I felt a perfect celebration like a piano's still insides.

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A Tour of Expatriate Paris

Glimpses of the Lost Generation on the Left Bank excerpted from *Expatriate Paris: A Literary and Cultural Guide to Paris of the 1920s*

Arlen J. Hansen

The Invalides and The Eiffel

QUAI ANATOLE FRANCE

Pont de la Concorde: On the river below the Chamber of Deputies floated a restored barge made into a restaurant.

Stravinsky's ballet *Les Noces* premiered on 13 June 1923, along with his *Pulcinella*, and to celebrate the occasion Gerald and Sara Murphy hosted a grand dinner on the barge the following Sunday, the 17th. Some forty artists, musicians, and patrons gathered for the event. Picasso was there, as were Serge Diaghilev, whose Russian Ballet Company had staged the ballet; composer Darius Milhaud; artist and writer Jean Cocteau; Tristan Tzara; poet Blaise Cendrars; and Scofield Thayer, editor of *The Dial*.

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Stravinsky arrived early to make sure his seating was satisfactory. It was—he was placed on the right hand of Princess de Polignac, who had commissioned the ballet. The dinner lasted all night. Instead of flowers, Sara Murphy piled small toys along the various placesettings, and Picasso, for one, amused himself with the tiny cars and animals all evening. A program of musical compositions alternated with the dinner courses.

Jean Cocteau, who'd come dressed as a ship captain, wandered among the crowd whispering, "*On coule*" ("We're sinking"). At one point, some guests removed the enormous wreath commemorating the occasion, and Stravinsky, running the length of the room, dived through it. Exemplary, even for the Murphys who seldom did anything gauche, this dinner was the talk of Paris for years.

Boulevard St. Germain

THE CAFÉS

#151: Brasserie Lipp.

Across from the Café de Flore and the Deux Magots, Lipp's had a comparatively small patio and large interior, which minimized its use by café-sitters, but increased its appeal to serious diners. Moreover, Lipp's served late-evening meals, so "by midnight," according to one patron, "[Lipp's] would be full of Left Bank Americans." In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway describes Lipp's splendid beer, potato salad, and cervelas—"a sausage like a heavy, wide frankfurter split in two and covered with a special mustard sauce."

#170: Café aux Deux Magots.

The Deux Magots has long been popular with Americans. When philosopher George Santayana visited Paris before World War I he frequented the Deux Magots with his friend, philosophy Professor Charles Augustus Strong.

In the late twenties Janet Flanner learned that Ernest Hemingway's father, like her own, was a suicide—"a piece of personal duplicate history that he and I discovered one day at a quiet back table in the Deux Magots café, which he always

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GERMAIN
SAINT MICHEL
BOULEVARD
RUE DE TOURNON
R. MABILLON
RUE GARANCIERE
R. DE SEINE
RUE DE TOURS
R. DE L'ODÉON
R. CORNEILLE
R. ROTROU
RUE DE CONDÉ
RUE DE VAUGIRARD
RUE MONSIEUR
RUE DE L'ANCIENNE COMÉDIE
RUE DAUPHINE
RUE DES GRANDS AUGUSTINS
RUE DE LA HARPE
RUE DE LA SORBONNE
RUE DES ÉCOLES
RUE DU PETIT PONT
RUE LAGRANGE
RUE DE LA MONTAGNE STE GENEVIÈVE
RUE DE LA MONTAGNE STE GENEVIÈVE
QUAI ST MICHEL
QUAI DE LA MÉGISSERIE
PONT ST MICHEL
PETIT PONT
PT AU DOUBLE
PARVIS N.D.
R. D'ARCOLE
Pl. St André des Arts
Pl. du Petit Pont
Pl. Maubert
Pl. Paul Painlevé
Pl. Michel Debré
Pl. Marcel Aymé
Pl. du Parvis Notre-Dame
Pl. Jean XXIII
Pl. Charles Dullin
Pl. Edmond Rostand
Pl. Jean Rostand
Pl. Jean Cocteau
Pl. Jean Paulhan

favored for serious talk, such as his reading aloud in a rumbling whisper the first poetry he had written after the war."

At the Deux Magots in January, 1929, Eugene Jolas introduced Hart Crane to Harry Crosby, the latter to commit suicide within the year and Crane three years later.

The Deux Magots was also popular with the Surrealists, who—according to Janet Flanner—"had their own club table facing the door of the Deux Magots, from which vantage point a seated Surrealist could conveniently insult any newcomer."

#172: Café de Flore.

Next door, the Flore passed in and out of fashion—unlike the Deux Magots, which retained a constant popularity. Prior to the twenties, the critic and poet Guillaume Apollinaire held his "Tuesdays" here, afternoons of conversation and, at times, heated discussion. Writer André Breton met Philippe Soupault at the Flore during one of these Tuesdays. Both men would later figure in the Dada and Surrealist movements.

Virgil Thomson noted that the Flore was "a dreary place till bought by a progressive management and done over to look less nineteenth-century. Offering toast, ham and eggs, and surprisingly good coffee, it came to be frequented by many of the better-off late risers."

RUE DES STS. PÈRES

#59: Hôtel du Pas-de-Calais.

In July, 1921, while his wife, Dorothy Shakespear, was staying with family and friends in England, Ezra Pound took a room in the Hôtel du Pas-de-Calais. The Pounds were waiting to move into the studio-pavilion Ezra had just leased on the rue Notre Dame des Champs.

Scofield Thayer, who came to Paris that month on his way to Vienna, went to see Pound at the Pas de Calais. "When one arrives at his [Pound's] hotel on the street of the Holy Fathers," Thayer said, "one usually learns from the young lady that Mr. Pound is *au bain*. But the young lady consents to going upstairs to see Mr. Pound and to inquire if Mr. Pound will see

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guests. Mr. Pound receives, beaming and incisive, [wearing] a pointed yellow beard and elliptical pince-nez and an open Byronic collar and an omelette-yellow bathrobe . . . . "

Odéon

RUE DUPUYTREN

#8: Shakespeare and Company (1919–1921).

Sylvia Beach opened her first lending library, bookstore, and mail repository here on 17 November 1919. On a cast-iron hook over the shop door she hung a portrait of Shakespeare, painted by Adrienne Monnier's friend, Charles Winzer.

Beach's early sales were mostly of British rather than American books, and her first customers were mostly Monnier's French friends. In the beginning years, Sylvia's greatest service was to carry racks full of English and American little reviews for "the bunnies." (Since *abonné* is French for "subscriber," Sylvia's sister Holly and others called the patrons "bunnies.")

RUE DE L'ODÉON

#12: Shakespeare and Company (1921–1941).

Sylvia Beach moved her bookstore and lending library from the rue Dupuytren to Rue de l'Odéon on 27 July 1921, making it probably the most famous expatriate address in Paris. Madame Tisserand was the concierge, and Sylvia's primary assistant in the shop was Mlle. Myrsine Moschos.

After 1922, Beach's *carte de la maison* rightfully carried the word "publisher," since she helped finance and supervised the publication of Joyce's *Ulysses* when all others avoided the risk. (Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap had been found guilty of violating American obscenity laws when they ran parts of the novel in *The Little Review.*)

Sylvia's decision to move Shakespeare and Company to the rue de l'Odéon was prompted by James Joyce's wealthy American patron, John Quinn, who'd come to Paris to meet the woman who was to publish *Ulysses*. Quinn thought that Sylvia's place on Dupuytren looked like a hovel. Meanwhile, Adrienne Monnier had noticed that an antique dealer at #12—across from

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her own bookstore at #7—wanted out of a lease. Sylvia eagerly took over the lease and moved her personal things to a room in Adrienne's apartment at #18. Nestled among a shoemaker's shop, a corset maker, a music store, and a manufacturer of nose-spray, Shakespeare and Company was now directly across from Adrienne's La Maison des Amis des Livres.

For a while Sylvia sublet the mezzanine rooms above her shop to George Antheil, the eccentric young composer who'd arrived in Paris on 13 June 1923 with Böske (sometimes spelled *Boski*; real name, Elizabeth Markus), whom he would marry in Budapest in November, 1925. When Böske wasn't there to let him in, Antheil entered the second floor apartment by climbing up the awning and window ledges outside Shakespeare and Company.

Beach's contribution to expatriate life is immeasurable. Not only did she carry—and thus promote—the expatriates' books and little reviews, she also lent money on occasion, provided free mailing services, sponsored readings, and in general served as hostess, message bearer, and confidante.

In 1923, the poet Archibald MacLeish described the sensation of walking up this short street: "Turning up from St. Germain, one kept Shakespeare and Company to starboard and Adrienne Monnier's Amis des Livres to port, and felt, as one rose with the tide toward the theater, that one had passed the gates of dream . . . . It was enough for a confused young lawyer in a grand and vivid time to look from one side to the other and say to himself . . . Gide was here on Thursday and on Monday Joyce was there."

Like most of the other American writers, Ernest Hemingway visited Shakespeare and Company regularly. Indeed, Sylvia Beach was one of the few persons with whom he seems never to have had a serious falling-out.

During the Second World War, prior to the French liberation of Paris from the Nazis, Hemingway commandeered a troop of American soldiers and took them to #12 rue de l'Odéon. Adrienne Monnier published an account of this incident in 1945, shortly after it occurred—setting the date as

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"Saturday the 26th, the day of the assassination attempt on General de Gaulle."

Noting the gunfire in the street and her own fear as she and Sylvia hid in their fifth-floor apartment, Adrienne described Sylvia's shock and joy when she heard a man's voice calling, "'Sylvia! Hemingway is here!'" The two women raced down the stairs to greet Hemingway, who seemed [in Monnier's words] "more of a giant than ever, bareheaded, in shirtsleeves." Grabbing the bird-sized Sylvia by the waist, Ernest hoisted her high in the air. Having arrived in "four little cars (not jeeps)," Ernest and his sixteen men had already cleared the rooftops of snipers. The previous night they'd stormed the Ritz and, according to Monnier, they "naturally . . . installed themselves in the best rooms."

At the corner of Gît le Coeur and St. André des Arts.

At 3:00 A.M. one morning in July, 1923, the story (perhaps apocryphal) goes, while heading for "the Calvados joint* on rue Gît-le-Coeur" with John Dos Passos and Gilbert Seldes, E. E. Cummings paused here to urinate on a wall. No sooner had Cummings begun than "a whole phalanx of gendarmes" appeared, placed him under arrest, and carted him off to precinct headquarters on the quai des Grands Augustins. The police were indifferent to the shouts of protest by Dos Passos and Seldes, and both men were kept out of the building while Cummings was booked. The arresting officer named the charge: Cummings was "un Américain qui pisse." "Quoi?" the recording clerk asked in amazement. "Encore un pisseur Américain?"

Seldes and Dos Passos were finally able to confirm that Cummings was indeed an American, and the police released

* Most likely, the "Calvados joint" the trio was heading for was the "Bol de Cidre," which lay beyond a heavy door down a narrow passage off Gît le Coeur. It was run by a muscular Norman who wore a traditional long white apron. Inside were barrels of cider and a small back room whose walls were autographed by famous customers like Verlaine and Wilde. Down in the cellar was a brace of arches that dated back to 1145, four centuries before Francis I had converted the building into his private stables. The cider was drunk from flat bowls and frequently spiked with Calvados—a strong version of applejack made in Normandy.

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him, requiring that he reappear the next morning for arraignment. In the interim, Seldes secretly called the writer Paul Morand, who was Ministére des Affaires Etrangéres, and got the charges dropped. When Cummings showed up at the station the next morning completely unaware of Seldes' action, he received merely a suspended sentence (*sursis*) and was promptly dismissed. Greatly relieved, Cummings hurried back to share his good news with Dos Passos and Seldes.

Meanwhile, knowing that Cummings was to be released, Seldes and Dos Passos had spent the morning rounding up friends and preparing posters and placards. Leaving the police station, Cummings met the band of friends, who were marching loudly towards it carrying signs that read, "Reprieve Le Pisseur Américain." Until he learned later that the "demonstration" was all a joke, Cummings was profoundly moved by what he took to be a sincere display of loyal support and friendship.

RUE ST. ANDRÉ DES ARTS

#42: Hôtel de la Havane [now gone].

Upon his return from a brief bicycling tour in Italy in October, 1921, E. E. Cummings took a room in this hotel. Trying to live frugally, Cummings estimated his expenses at $85 a month, even though he ate frequently at his favorite restaurant, La Reine Blanche, on boulevard St. Germain, across from the Cluny. "I eat snails almost daily," he wrote his mother, "oysters biweekly, mussels weekly, mermaids once a month."

RUE JACOB

#20: Natalie Barney's apartments.

After moving into this three-hundred-year-old house in 1909, Natalie Barney lived here for the next fifty years. In the garden courtyard she built a small Greek "Temple à l'Amitié" on which she staged various dances, concerts (including a string quartet by George Antheil), and readings. Prior to World War I, Mata Hari is reported to have danced in the garden naked.

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Besides writing poetry and prose herself, Barney appears in Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, as Valerie Seymour, and in other avant-garde works. On Friday afternoons from five o'clock to eight o'clock, Barney held her salons, which rivaled Gertrude Stein's for the importance of their guests. Whereas Gertrude Stein promoted cubism and emphatically identified with modernism, Barney held to the fashions of La Belle Epoque.

A devout patron of the arts, Barney claimed the friendship of Marcel Proust, Colette, Rainer Maria Rilke, André Gide, Djuna Barnes, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Max Jacob.

RUE CARDINALE

#2: The Black Sun Press.

Harry and Caresse Crosby discovered this shop of master printer Roger Lescaret in 1927 and set up their Black Sun Press immediately. Lescaret's shop may have been tiny, and thick with flies, but his work was impeccable. The editions printed by this craftsman were tastefully supervised by the Crosbys, and the volumes are remarkable for the quality of their paper and inks, their design, and their authors—including D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce.

RUE DU CARDINAL LEMOINE

Next to #74: A bal musette [at one time in the twenties called "Bal du Printemps"; it became a disco, an "art" kino, etc.]

The designation "bal musette" refers to a bar with a dancefloor and some kind of music. This bal musette, which angled back from #74 in the general direction of the *Place* Contrescarpe, sat directly beneath Ernest and Hadley's windows. Besides being mentioned in *A Moveable Feast*, it's the place where Jake Barnes meets Lady Brett at the opening of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Ford Madox Ford liked to rent the *bal* for his parties, which had grown too large and unmanageable for his boulevard Arago cottage. The music here was provided by its accordion-playing owner, who dangled a half-smoked cigarette from his lower lip as he sat in a sort of

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pulpit above the dance floor. Less dancing went on here, according to reports, than shuffling and jostling and groping.

BOULEVARD DE GRENELLE

#6: Velodrome d'Hiver (torn down in 1959).

Ernest Hemingway and others—including Allen Tate, Sylvia Beach, and Adrienne Monnier—came out here periodically to watch the six-day bicycle races. After dinner or a show, a group of revelers might visit the Vel'd'Hiv' to end the evening. The wealthier spectators often offered a prize to one of the racers. When the awards weren't thought sufficiently generous, the regular, poorer audience (*les populaires*) would shout insults up to the wealthy set, calling the bejeweled ladies "*poules de luxe*."

Montparnasse

BOULEVARD DU MONTPARNASSE

Near the intersection with the boulevard Raspail, at the Vavin Metro station, are four cafés—the Dôme, Rotonde, Select, and Coupole. Veritable expatriate "institutions," these cafés served as assembly points for parties; de facto bulletin boards, where one could learn of cheap hotels; literary agencies, where editors would search for contributors; and, often, informal banks, where one might obtain a loan for a few days "until the mail boat arrived."

Each of the four cafés had its own identity and clientele. One expatriate observed that "it is easier to change one's mind than to change one's café." Americans, for example, seemed to prefer the Dôme over the Rotonde. An explanation, perhaps apocryphal, holds that one morning in 1922 the Rotonde's owner spotted a young American woman—hatless and smoking!—on the terrasse. *When he insisted that she sit at a table inside, where her "looseness" wouldn't be so conspicuous, she stormed across the street to the more tolerant Café du Dôme, effectively taking the English and American trade with her.*

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#99: Le Select.

The Select opened in 1925 where an old furniture shop had once been located. Part of the attraction of the Select was that it was open all night. Monsieur Select wore "long melancholy moustaches like Flaubert," and he tended to stay at the tiny stove behind the bar cooking Welsh rarebits. The volatile Madame Select was an imposing figure, with sternly arched eyebrows, high color, and heavy bosom. She wore little fingerless gloves to keep her hands warm without restricting her facility with coins.

Madame Select was the one who ordered Hart Crane's arrest in July, 1929, for brawling—or refusing to pay his bill (accounts of the arrest differ). By 1929 Americans had become less popular than they were immediately after the war. The Paris cops beat Crane severely and dragged him face-down over the cobblestones of boulevard Montparnasse, then dumped him in La Santé slammer.

#102: La Coupole.

Located close to the Dôme, in what had once been an old coal and wood yard, this large café opened on 20 December 1927, with Josephine Baker and other celebrities in attendance. Street-gossip holds that this date was chosen deliberately because of the saying, *le vingt dissipe la tristesse.* ("The 20th drives away sorrow"; *vingt* being pronounced like *vin*—"wine"—makes the pun.) Aiming to attract tourists, the good-natured barman and part-owner, Gaston, arranged for tour buses to include the Coupole in their itineraries. "Without his [Gaston's] handsome presence, his quiet generosity to artists, his beguiling smile, and his white-lipped fury for any kind of violence," Kay Boyle noted, "the Coupole would have been a quite undistinguished place."

Besides its facade of neon lights, the Coupole boasted two magnificent pillars, one designed by Moise Kisling and the other by Fernand Léger. The café soon caught on with the Americans. When Robert McAlmon prepared to leave Paris in 1929, he didn't stop to say goodbye to his good friend, Kay

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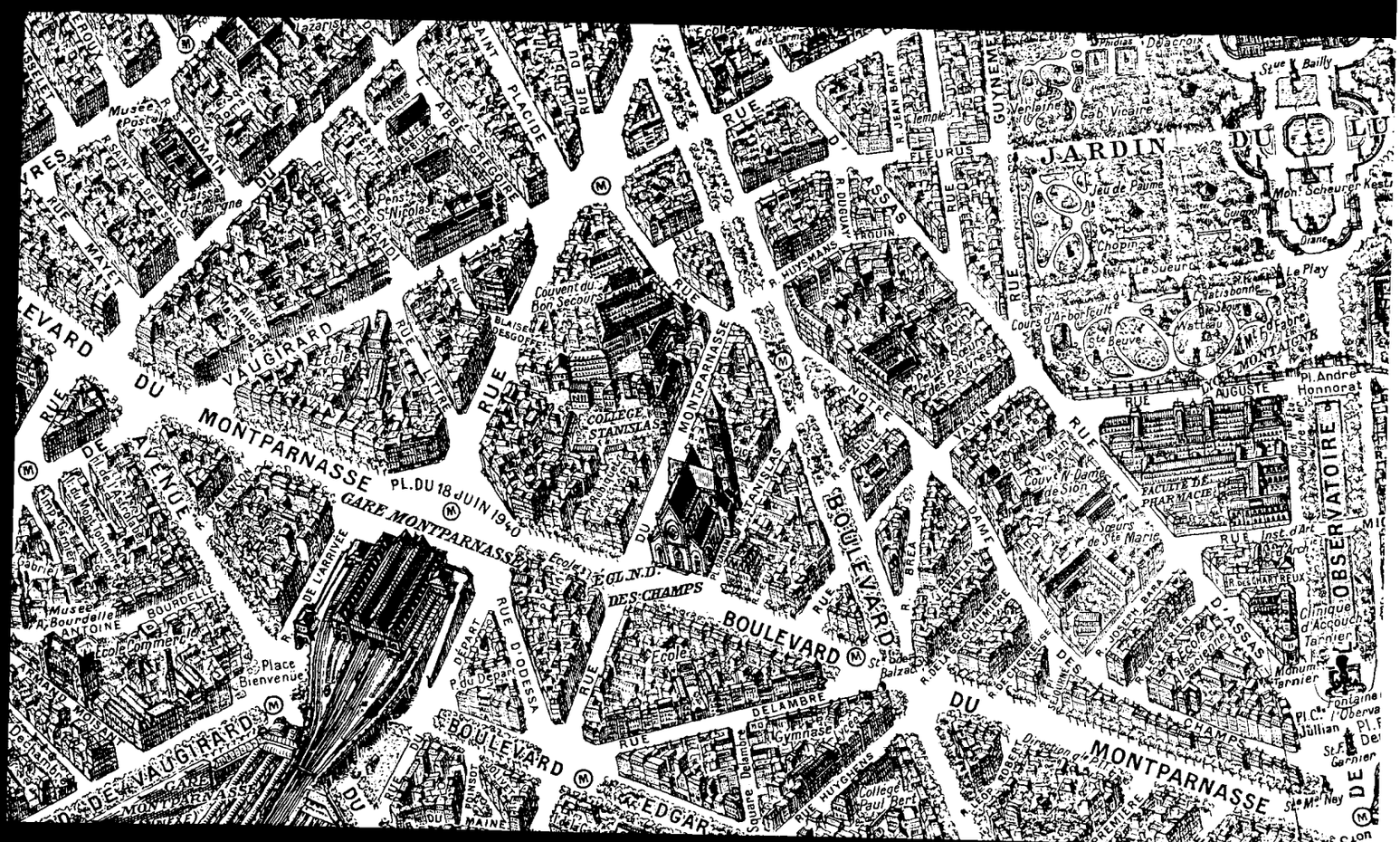
BOULEVARD SAINT GERMAIN
BOULEVARD SAINT GERMAIN
RUE DE SEVRES
RUE DE RENNES
RUE DU BAC
RUE DE VARENNE
RUE DE BABYLONE
RUE DE GRENELLE
RUE DE L'ODEON
RUE DE TOURNON
RUE DE VISCONTI
RUE JACOB
RUE BONAPARTE
RUE DE SEINE
RUE MAZARINE
RUE DAUPHINE
RUE DE L'ANCIENNE COMEDIE
RUE DE BUCI
RUE DE L'ECOLE DE MEDECINE
RUE DES SAINTS-PERES
RUE DU VIEUX COLOMBIER
RUE DU CHERCHE-MIDI
RUE DE L'UNIVERSITE
RUE DE LILLE
RUE DE BELLECHASSE
RUE SAINT-DOMINIQUE
RUE DE GRENELLE
RUE DE LA CHAISE
RUE DE COMMAILLE
RUE DE L'ABBAYE
RUE DE L'ECHAUDE
RUE DES CANETTES
RUE DE FURSTENBERG
RUE DE L'ODEON
RUE DE CONDE
RUE DE L'ECOLE DE MEDECINE
RUE DE L'ANCIENNE COMEDIE
RUE DE BUCI


BOULEVARD DU MONTPARNASSE
PL. DU 18 JUIN 1940
GARE MONTPARNASSE
BOULEVARD DES INVALIDES
BOULEVARD DU MONTPARNASSE
BOULEVARD EDGAR
BOULEVARD DES CHAMPS
AVENUE DE L'OBSERVATOIRE
JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG
RUE DE VAUGIRARD
RUE DE L'ARRIVÉE
RUE DU DÉPART
RUE D'ODESSA
RUE DELAMBRE
RUE DE LA GAITÉ
RUE DE LA GRANDE CHAUMIÈRE
RUE DE LA CHAISE
RUE DE FLEURUS
RUE GUYNEMER
RUE DE MAINE
RUE DU MONTPARNASSE
RUE DE RENNES
RUE DE VAVIN
RUE DE L'ABBÉ GRÉGOIRE
RUE DU CHERCHE-MIDI
RUE DE L'ABBÉ DE L'EPÉE
RUE DE LA CONVENTION
RUE DU PÈRE CORENTIN
RUE DU CHÂTEAU
RUE DU MAINE
RUE DU PONCEAU
RUE DU PLACIDE
RUE DU CHEMIN VERT
RUE DU CHEMIN DE FER
RUE DU CHEMIN DE FER
RUE DU CHEMIN DE FER

Boyle. Knowing that sooner or later she'd appear at the Coupole, he left her a farewell note there, telling her among other things where she could pick up his trusty, "fairly new" Remington portable typewriter. The Coupole, like the other cafés, was more than a place to have a drink.

#105: Café de la Rotonde.

Describing what this café was like between its founding in 1911 and World War I, one early patron noted: "The Rotonde was then a small zinc bar, a long narrow room with a terrace, where we drank our grog *Américain* in the coldest weather, warming ourselves at great porcelain stoves. [We] were its first artist patrons. . . . " In 1924, the Rotonde expanded by annexing what had been the Café du Parnasse at #103. At the height of its operation, the Rotonde was a café, grill-room, gallery, dance-hall, card-room, and "boîte de nuit"—all rolled into one.

Directly across from the Dôme, the Rotonde was a favorite hangout for expatriate Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, before, during, and after the 1917 Revolution. To cultivate its appeal, the proprietors kept racks of Eastern European newspapers for its customers. Eventually, the Rotonde became the center for those caught up in the "Baltic fad," eager for Greek liqueur, Turkish coffee, and colorful Serbian costume.

Hemingway hated the Rotonde, claiming that "on entering you get the same feeling as when entering the bird house of the zoo." His contempt showed in a piece he wrote for a Toronto paper: "The scum of Greenwich Village, New York, has been skimmed off and deposited in large ladlesful on that section of Paris adjacent to the Café Rotonde. New scum, of course, has risen to take the place of the old, but the oldest scum, the thickest scum and the scummiest scum has come across the ocean, somehow, and . . . has made the Rotonde the leading Latin Quarter showplace for tourists in search of atmosphere."

In 1921 the back room, "where [all-night poker games] used to be played," according to Malcolm Cowley, "was then fur-

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nished, or upholstered, with four dispirited prostitutes who never seemed to have any clients. . . . "

The manager of the Rotonde was widely suspected of being a *mouchard*—a stool pigeon. According to rumor, he had turned in several of the Marxist revolutionaries who frequented the Rotonde. On Bastille Day (July 14), 1923, a group of American and French writers and artists barged into the café, and in the heat of the "invasion," Malcolm Cowley slugged the proprietor. Collared by a celebrating policeman, Cowley was immediately surrounded by dozens of his compatriots—all of whom eagerly testified on Cowley's behalf.

#108: Café du Dôme.

Located on the southwest corner of the Montparnasse–Raspail intersection, the Dôme is the oldest and most famous of the Montparnasse cafés. Prior to the end of World War I it was a rundown joint, small and ugly. A corner *bistro*, principally for working men in 1922, the Dôme had only modest space inside with a rough green billiard table—and no terrace tables.

During the years before the Great War, the Dôme was frequented by Lenin, Trotsky, and other revolutionaries. Later, the Marxists went to the Rotonde, when the Americans and British co-opted the Dôme. The modernization of the Dôme in 1923 quadrupled its size by adding rows of tables inside and out. It became *the* place for an expatriate writer or artist to be—and to be seen.

Although Ernest and Hadley Hemingway frequented the Dôme during their first months in Paris, Hemingway soon was berating the Americans who flocked there. "They are nearly all loafers expending the energy that an artist puts into his creative work in talking about what they are going to do . . . ," he wrote in a piece for the Toronto *Star Weekly*.

During the summer and fall of 1923, Sinclair Lewis visited these cafés and encountered considerable hostility, some of it no doubt deserved. One evening when Lewis was quite drunk, he announced loudly to the patrons of the Dôme that he could construct characters better than Flaubert. When he pronoun-

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ced that he was a better stylist than Flaubert too, someone shouted, "Sit down, you're just a best-seller!" Thoroughly put-down, he avoided "the pro-Joyce crowd at the Dome" when he came back to Paris in 1924. In his 1925 *American Mercury* article, "Self-Conscious America," Lewis sneered at "the geniuses and their disciples who frequent the Café du Dôme at Montparnasse." Inexplicably, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech on 12 December 1930, Lewis praised the writing being done by the expatriates in Paris.

RUE NOTRE DAME DES CHAMPS

#70: Ralph Cheever Dunning's "Bird Cage."

A poet who produced only two slim volumes of purple verse in his life, Cheever Dunning lived in a tiny room on the ground floor here from 1905 until his death in 1930. Dunning's room was so small that Wambly Bald, columnist for the *Tribune*, called it "virtually a wooden box." The room contained one chair, a cot, a small pot-bellied stove, and a makeshift bookcase. Dunning's friends, few though they were, called it Dunning's "Bird Cage."

Although Dunning frequented cafés like the Dôme, he stayed remote while café-sitting by reading and periodically sipping a glass of hot milk.

It's been claimed that he uttered only a few sentences in all of his twenty-five years in Paris. And, during the last few years of his life when his friends took him food, he frequently refused it. Some contemporary observers suggested that his diet of milk and cheese was caused by a heavy opium habit.

Robert McAlmon tells of the time Ezra Pound—who lived in the same courtyard complex for over three years—urged McAlmon to find some opium for Dunning, who was suffering withdrawal agonies. McAlmon, who knew Paris perhaps as well as any American, was having little success when he spotted Hemingway in the Closerie des Lilas. Sidling up to him, McAlmon whispered Dunning's dilemma. "Hell," boomed Hemingway, "Ezra's told you too!" Dunning's problem, apparently, was no secret.

Eventually, McAlmon got Dunning placed in a sanato-

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rium where he stayed for two months. The treatment, though, didn't take, and Dunning underwent several more "cures" before his death in 1930.

Ford Madox Ford called the enigmatic Dunning "the living Buddha of Montparnasse," and Hemingway described him as the man who died because "he forgot to eat."

RUE DELAMBRE

#9-bis: Parnasse Bar [now a cinema].

Jimmy Charters, who tended bar at the Parnasse for a while, says that the manager's "idea of making a successful bar was to fill it up with girls who would attract the men." Directly opposite the Dingo, the Parnasse "stayed open all night, and most of its clients, who were largely French, came after the other places closed."

His English and American patrons followed Jimmy to his new bar and, according to one observer, "soon it was a madhouse in which one could rarely find a seat, and never a table, during drinking hours. When Jimmy took over and brought the Americans and British with him, the receipts jumped from five hundred francs to three thousand francs a day."

#10: Dingo Bar [now L'Auberge du Centre].

Lou Wilson and his Dutch wife, Jopie, owned and operated this celebrated hangout. It was a small place, with only six tiny tables and a few stools along a short bar. Jimmy Charters tended bar here also, making it attractive to an English-speaking clientele. Jopie was especially solicitous of women like Zelda Fitzgerald and Duff Twysden, who were having emotional problems; Jimmy the barman was a good audience for the men. "We let some of the clients run up bills," he recalls. "I'm told the unpaid bills over a nine-year period in the Dingo totaled half a million francs."

According to Hemingway's recollections in *A Moveable Feast*, he first met Fitzgerald in the Dingo. "He [Scott] had come into the Dingo bar in the rue Delambre where I was sitting with some completely worthless characters [and] introduced himself. . . ." Hemingway notes that he "much preferred"

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Fitzgerald's companion—Dunc Chaplin, "the famous pitcher"—to Scott himself. (Chaplin, it might be noted, was "famous" primarily in Hemingway's mind, for although he pitched for Princeton University, no one named "Dunc" or "Duncan Chaplin" ever pitched in the big leagues.)

RUE DU DÉPART

#1–3 Lavenue.

Lavenue was both an elegant restaurant and a hotel. Oscar Wilde's first weeks of Parisian exile were spent here. Today the weather-worn word "Lavenue" is barely visible in the concrete facade above the tavern that has replaced the restaurant.

In 1925 Ford Madox Ford, Nina Hamnett, and Robert McAlmon decided to hold fortnightly gatherings. Lavenue was reserved for the first meeting, which was designed to honor James Joyce. Someone, however, forgot to inform Joyce, who had to be fetched at the last minute. The evening was a flop; ideas for future sessions were dropped.

RUE DE LA SANTÉ

#42: Prison de la Santé [Maison d'Arrêt de la Santé].

Prior to World War I, Guillaume Apollinaire was held overnight in this prison after being accused of stealing some small *objets d'art* from the Louvre. He had indeed taken a few pieces, some stories say, in order to return them, thereby demonstrating the poor security in the museum.

In July, 1929, Hart Crane spent some time in jail here after his brawl at the Café Select. Accounts differ, but one version says that Crane was in jail for only a matter of hours. Another version holds that Kay Boyle, the Crosbys, and other friends were out of town when Crane was arrested and thus unable to help the poet out of his predicament. All versions agree that Crane was eventually assessed an 800-franc fine and given an eight-day suspended sentence.

#55: A la Bonne Santé.

Hart Crane's friends—Harry Crosby, Roger Vitrac, and Whit

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Burnett (according to Crosby's diary)—awaited the poet's release in this bistro directly across from the jail. While waiting for him to emerge from the massive prison walls, they played checkers and drank beer. Crane came out, according to Crosby, looking "unshaved hungry wild."

BOULEVARD DU MONTPARNASSE

#171: Closerie des Lilas.

Originally a country inn (*guinguette*) on the road to Orléans, this café "maintained all the traditions of the old Latin Quarter."

On 17 February 1922, a group of avant-garde artists and intellectuals (including André Breton, Erik Satie, Roger Vitrac, and Fernand Léger) scheduled a "Congress" at the Closerie. The purpose was "to determine the directives for the defense of the modern spirit." The proceedings of the Congress would then be published and broadcast throughout the western world.

Among the groups invited to this Modernism Congress were the anarchic Dadaists, headed by Tristan Tzara. But Tzara, true to the spirit of Dada, wanted no part of the Congress or, for that matter, any kind of "movement." Dada was to be kept pure—heretical, impish, and unprogrammatic. Breton, a friend of Tzara's and the other Dadaists', pleaded with them to attend, but they refused.

Failing to appreciate Breton's efforts, the Congress organizers accused him of sabotaging the meeting. Instead of a Congress, the affair turned into a mock-trial of Breton, who was charged with fracturing the Modernist movement by antagonizing Dada. Picasso was in attendance, as were Brancusi, Matisse, Cocteau, and nearly one hundred others.

The upshot of this indictment of Breton was his breaking away from the Dadaists and other "modernists" of the day. By 1923, his splinter movement was known as "Surrealism." The "First Surrealist Manifesto" was published in December, 1924. Thus, the Closerie is arguably the site of the inception of Surrealism.

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If the Closerie effectively saw the birth of Surrealism, it also witnessed one of the last great banquets that had been traditional among French intellectuals, writers, and critics during the previous century.

In June, 1925, the French literary journal *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* published a tribute to a living but neglected poet who called himself Saint-Pol-Roux-le-Magnifique. (His real name was Paul Roux.) Because of the nature of his verse, some critics referred to him as the "Rabelais of poetry." As in previous decades, a vast banquet to honor the occasion was held on 1 July 1925 at the Closerie, where *vers et prose* soirées and dinners had been traditional for nearly a century.

Responding to an anti-German remark that he'd overheard after dinner, André Breton rose to defend the honor of his German friend Max Ernst, who was present. Quarrels broke out, fruit was thrown, and a brawl ensued. Philipe Soupault, the French critic, swung from the chandelier, knocking over wine bottles, flowers, and table settings.

A crowd gathered outside, a few of whom joined the fracas. The amazed onlookers saw some of France's leading intellectuals and artists being arrested and others, mostly Breton's indefatigable Surrealists who were bloody from battle, being loaded into ambulances.

The Closerie des Lilas was also a Hemingway favorite: "It was one of the best cafés in Paris. It was warm inside in the winter and in the spring and fall it was very fine outside with the tables under the shade of the trees on the side where the statue of Marshal Ney was, and the square, regular tables under the big awnings along the boulevard." Hemingway added that "there were other good cafés to work in but they were a long walk away and this was my home café."

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Lord? Remember Thy Beauty-Parlor Operators, Lord

Allan Gurganus

Let's us celebrate small town beauticians.

All the women ones and some of them kind, particular and tasteful boys. Godsends, the entire curling bunch. Underpaid, they do more local good than many doctors I could name.

I have aged way past their help. See this doormat hair? it's now such white witch's straw, all I know to do with it is roll the mess into a bun and put both it and Vanity behind me. I miss Lolly's magical hired hands pouring almost-scalding water across my brainpan, anointing me towards looking at least so-so again. My personal hair coach lectured me whenever I saved up for a visit to her Palace of Permanents, said, "I got three words for you, Lucille, and three only: Moisturize, Moisturize, Moisturize." —Darling? at my dry age, that's easier said than done.

I sit here in this bed of our charity home, half-blind now. But, eyes purposefully shut, I lately try and focus on Local Beauty, which really is the only kind. Nurses wash my hair just once the week—you need it more if you've been proud in life

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as I was and—on sunnier days—am yet. Good days, I can almost feel my rangy Lolly standing back of me, sitting queenly here, both of us facing facts, the mirror. Me, I never was a beauty, but maintenance I always understood and still respect.

Let's sing about the under-tipped and overworked, hands burned by strong chemicals, souls weighed by confessions from the pincurled. "Lolly's Palais de Beauté Feminine du Falls, (NC), manicures, Vendredi et Mercredi". Let's go back, you mind?

My husband, a veteran of the Civil War (the man that later grew famous as its last survivor) hit me sometimes. War, it made him, he said afterwards. But such nicks, lumps and bruises meant I needed Lolly more. He only hit on drunken Fridays, this was Saturday, and tomorrow I had Sunday School to teach. People shouldn't see a starter-shiner and the knot at my left temple. Lolly, help! I settled our nine children with my best friend, a black woman who was—I now think, looking back—probably the true love of my life, but that's another story. Free of kids, I buttoned on my white pearl-buttoned gloves. I used them only for weddings, funerals, and Lolly's.

I was alone today—with nothing hanging on to me at either side. Felt like I might float away into the elm trees that'd grown so much since my girlhood.

Lolly always squeezed in a spare appointment for me. Loll gave me more attention than any non-regular deserved. She'd been ahead of me in school (she was older, but held back—though she was really quick as she could be). I'd acted nice to her back then. She had a memory, Lolly did. I come in smiling. She always made a fuss. You can know that somebody's trying hard to cheer you and you can *still* be cheered, if you are smart. Permanents were new then. I couldn't really afford one, which is just as well since Modern Science has since proved they absolutely fry the person. A rinse'd do.

Only one building in all of white-owned Falls was stucco painted a let-her-rip wedding-cake pink. "Palais avec manicurist," the sign said. Momma, a snob, made great fun of it,

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but I maintain, Is Lolly's work professional or not? That's what matters. Classiness—blue-chip classiness—is something I been turning my back on since age four.

The Palais, entire, was only about sixteen square foot, but oh, honey, so much can happen in so tiny a place. Felt like your getting in a sloshy lifeboat with six to nine other women and when you again set your foot on dry land you were stronger for the ride, ready to stride home, but sensing you had really *been* somewhere.

Lolly was her own best walking ad. She had a long horsy face, but that never discouraged her copying any hairdo seen anyplace in any magazine, on any human movie screen. If, later, Ginger Rogers (for Wednesday night's picture show at the Cameo) wore her gold hair swept in one frothy teapot storm all to one side, count on finding a long-faced Lolly grocery-shopping in that very "do" tomorrow. If you called attention to it, Loll forever acted like she didn't have the foggiest idea what you meant. "Oh, this? Just a stab at it. Ginger's's more extreme but she's got the features to go *with*, me . . . well . . . I saw this photo taken of her talking at a garden party, talking with . . . David. I *like* Ginger, but she's not up to the Prince of Wales. For all her moxie, it's something a little coarse about our Ginger."

Seeing the "do" on Lolly, any local lady could then decide whether it might someway suit *her*. You heard women say, "You *know* if it turned out even so-so on Lolly, it's going to be fabulous on you. I believe she even guesses that. If only she had a man . . . I mean she has *men*, plenty, from what she says, but Loll needs one good *steady*. Who deserves it more?" Lolly agreed, and said so often. Thing about Lollie (she spelled the name either "y" or "ie," depending on her mood and last night's movie), her love life had been what you'd call checkered, plus her oft-described digestion was a mess. She was Falls' one white double-divorcée. Lolly's only son, a juvenile offender, had been in every federal prison on the map, but through each tribulation, her hair and nails remained a perfect wonder of the world. It almost seemed enough.

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She settled me at the sink for a hot wash. I dreaded her noticing my almost-down-to-normal lip, her feeling the two goose eggs on my scalp.

My daughters thought the sun rose and set in Lolly's hair. Never the same twice, always a different shade of brown. Loll was savage in condemning peroxide and those who used it on anything but blisters. "I don't *dye* people," she said, proud. "Lolly transforms, Lolly improves, but this is not just some some crude henna hut. At Le Palais, I want to bring out the real woman underneath, not lay on a paint job that hides Inner Glow. Real beauty comes from Inner Glow, not bottles. All my customers have that certain something, Inner Glow. See anybody here that doesn't?" We looked around at each other—all deformed in pin curls, slopped with lotions, egg whites tightening pouchy eyes—we figured we were all in the extreme outer progress headed *toward* Inner Glow. We gave each other the benefit of the doubt.

Benefit of the doubt: darling, that's what small town beauty parlors are there for.

During the shampoo part, while she hummed her all-time favorite tune, I leaned my head into her specially notched sink. Loll stood over me, wetting the scalp, and I loved being here because I forgot everything. The kids were in good hands. I could've been anybody. Her pet song was "I Danced With a Man Who Danced With a Girl Who Danced With The Prince of Wales." (And Lolly had, with two such gents, though she wasn't mentioning no names.) Her first love was Edward but when he got kinged, she fixed on his nephew. Her shop walls were soon lined with professionally framed photos of her David—him wearing pure-white polo togs but never really playing. "Too refined to need to even *try*, at least publicly," Lolly said. "His chin, I'm the first to admit, is a touch weak. But me, it works on me. It proves his Inner Glow even more. The boy's nation feels his IG. I mean, don't you want to just take him home with you late some Saturday night, and tuck him under a blue blanket and just *see*?"

Down the pike, David—as history tells us—gave up his kingdom for the woman he loved, though God knows why

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he picked that one. I believe: she *made* him. Lolly somewhat resembled Mrs. Simpson—knobby, long-nosed, doubly-divorced-looking. Loll was not to be consoled over David's poor choice. On the couple's wedding date, Loll took down every picture of either Prince of Wales, carried them to the courtyard behind her Palais. Squirting them with lethal hair-care products, Loll threw a match, watched glass pop, watched David's greyhound beauty curl and brown.

"A entire country's Inner Glow is . . . doused, and for what? some tramp golddigger with a butt like a boy's," said Lolly. We'd never connected the name Palais with Loll's interest in her Crown Prince. But not a week later she had the sign changed. Reduced to just "Falls' Beauty and Inner Glow Headquarters." You could tell, some dream had died.

So on my visit that day, before England changed hands, when Le Palais still had its name, Loll was humming the Princely song, squinting in her Lucky's back-smoke, and passing along less international trashy news. Was then that strong fingers touched my scalp's worst knot and, though I'd vowed not to, flinched. Couldn't help it. This came during the brief period when my husband was playing out his Hit Parade of Battles on my youngish noggin. Loll's smart fingers with their red talons right off found the biggest bump. Fingers skirted it like magic, not missing a beat in her tale of misplaced North Carolina highway funds and a certain lieutenant governor's love-nest casino in the nearby countryside.

There might have been ten other women occupying the sixteen square feet of the Palais, tucked under industrial-size blowers and soaking in some necessary cream or shellac dedicated to the torturing to the surface of Inner Glow. Some such glow rested stubbornly farther *in* than others, and I placed mine among the deep-seated problem glows. But even with this high-octane gossip, and even considering close quarters, only one soul ever knew that Loll was working around a Asia Minor relief map conked on my head. Fingertips treated my each welt like secret royalty.

Chattering, she quick gets me in pin curls to hide the goose eggs. Before she whips my bib off I feel Loll do some serious

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backcombing of my thinning hair. And all the while, she's scurrying from other head to other head. Wouldn't hire no assistant. One queen per Palais, but a cross one: "Estelle, I swear to God, look at you. Your moisturizer has clogged. Now didn't I tell you to call me when it clabbered up on you, honey? Well, does that look clogged or clogged? Now wake up and put down that back issue of *Liberty*. Your glow'll just *stay* inner without some cooperation here. I want you attractive at the Daughters of the Confederacy Antebellum Belle Bash, but do *you*, Estelle? All right then!"

And those many years, Lolly told nobody. She never blamed me for the welts and bruises. (Blamed *him*, I mean, blamed him.)

In crooning praise of cosmotology, I donnot plan to single out them New York ones already so famous for it. They hardly need kind words from plain old me. I'm leaving out those men whose names get listed right on photos in glossy ladies' mags: Hair by Mr. Thus and So. (Like they invented human HAIR itself and didn't just drag some foam and comb through this one gal's!) Such men (why are the best known ones always men, I ask you?) take a regular fresh-faced girl, new to New York City, and they lacquer her till she looks looking glossy, blank and over-designed as, say, a new car is. Probably nice girl, too, from some hometown no bigger than mine, Falls, NC, the Bird Sanctuary, pop. 2400. You heard of it? Well, that's okay, child—nobody's perfect.

I just want to thank the underpaid and far-flung women (and nice boys of all ages) who do honest hair and nail and face work because they got a sense of mission and good values and because they are slaves to beauty. That's the thing about beauty; monopolies won't work—nobody's its boss, everybody smart seeks to just serve it in hopes of that stray tip, the perks that loveliness can spill your way, baptising credit, darling—moist.

Our beautician of genius, lonely amidst her gifts, dearly loved a challenge. Faithful to her lifelong regulars, she'd even perform last rites. I mean a final set and rinse at the funeral

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parlor of your choice. Her first and last freebie. I wish she could come back and do me soon. She will not. I see her now: It's '29, before the Crash and all seems well. Loll arrives at Yost's Home of the Arts Funerary, and she's in widow's weeds, gauzy dotted-Swiss veils purchased the day Valentino died and used again when her weakling "David" wed that Baltimore white trash. She carries a black leather doctor's bag full of pin curlers, clamps, pastel sopping lotions in squirt bottles meant for ketchup but elevated instead toward Beauty's goopy uses. Loll is led into the tiled backroom, to the brushed steel table, to the sheet under which rests the fag-end remnant of Grace Stevens' Inner Glow. Loll peels back percale (Here I'm just guessing, backcombing my story, "teasing" as we called it once) and Loll says maybe, "Hi, Grace. Your color's right good, considering. Your hair's a thorough rat-nest, even considering. You forever snapped at me, during, "Ou, I'm sorry but you *yank*, Lolly—you're fine at it, but Loll, you get carried away and you just yank." Well, Grace honey, this last go-round, I sure *could*, but, this go-round, Grace, for old time's sake, I promise that I won't, yank, once."

Working on the last state of Grace, Loll does manage to visually soak up them details she will later lather forth to us, her still-living customers. "Beautiful body, Grace had. Her face might've seemed too Presbyterian, pinchy, but she had the torso of a Dottie Gish, pert, tight. Like a girl except for a certain understandable kind of crêpiness in poor Grace's thigh area."

Lolly, by offering a free burial permanent, put herself beyond criticism. She also managed to grab the final word. Grace's funeral, for one, got upstaged by the corpse's unrequested hairdo. "At long last," Loll said from under her mosquito netting of veil, "The real her." Our wizard addressed a stunned crowd gathered near the coffin. "I forever told our lovely Grace here, I said bangs'll be your making, girl. But did Grace listen? Claimed her Bill here would divorce a blond with bangs. Bill, you and the others, you all look take your time for a few more minutes and decide what bangs DO for a Grace-shaped face. I rest my case."

And Lollie retired to a distant folding chair, stayed savagely

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busy with her emery board, but jumpy, hoping, like us all (the artists especially) to be, at the last possible chance, voted wholly right and completely necessary. Only human, really.

Loll admitted that the Nickelodian had been her earliest sourcebook of follicle inspiration. She laughed that nobody in the tri-county area was more movie mad. On her rare days off, Lolly took roast chicken picnic lunches to the Cameo Moving Picture Theater. She used linen napkins, her way of proving that the Cinema was a art form legit as plays or Miss Duncan's Greek-inspired scarf–dancing. Loll could watch a picture clear through again just to catch one extra's fleeting spitcurl. After Mr. Griffith's "Intolerance," Loll's clientele looked exceedingly Babylonian for two weeks and mostly liked that.

Rumor had it: Loll was morally loose, but only in exchange for art experiences she could not otherwise obtain on no local level. Some claimed Lollie rendered sex favors to that dull Mr. Andrews (father of seven, Church deacon, Cameo manager). Loll was still paying off Andrews for bringing Falls, NC our first Neal Hamilton pic, way back. Andrews, the old turkey gobbler, drunk with power, soon summoned the Palais' owner. He squired her up to the Cameo's snug projection booth—handed her this parchment booklet with tassels. Thing was big as a New York City menu, it said that theaters world-wide could soon book "Ben Hur." Years in the making, historically accurate, cast of thousands (which, to Loll, meant thousands of hairstyles). Andrews leaned back, smirked, stroked his adam's apple, "Lollie, flapper, what do I get for bringing you it?—Check out the stills." Our soft-hearted Lollie soon sat groaning, "No fair. Not Ramon Navarro in a gold chariot, barechested, and with his naturally wavy hair just plastered down under enough pomade to where his whole fine head looks . . . *leather*! Not that, Mr. Andrews. This movie'd probably come here without my . . . what? My doing what?"

Three not-unattractive brother-in-laws were mentioned and a little hunting cabin out past Tarboro and a certain Sunday afternoon, say, soon? What Lolly did for her art! Meaning for us. And for art's own impartial sake, drawing it to us out in

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the midst of nowhere, coating us in it over and over—follicle-stimulating, renewing, moisturizing art!

Art, from whom nice blessings flow,

Art, the source of Inner Glow.

One early Thursday, Lolly's eight AM rinse and set customer beat at the door of the little efficiency behind the former-Palais. The kerchiefed client felt irked to be left limp and greasy with the weekend coming down on us so hard. No Lollie. When the customer peeked in, she saw spilled nail polish, a sure sign of red alarm: Lolly never spilled. Loll was three days shy of fifty-nine, her heart went. A group of us regulars and would-be regulars like me, we gathered to grieve and then decided, yeah, we had to. We were miffed that our hubbies had not understood how scary it might be, a funeral home at night, how sad it was to lose the only woman who could truly read your moods and who knew you like some braille-savvy genius of phrenology knows a gal, by touch, head in hand, your head, her genius hands. Now at Yost's Home of the Funerary Arts, we stood around the brushed steel table (Brushed!).

Once Old Man Yost left us alone, we ourselves pulled back her sheet. Without makeup and a serious curling head start on the day, Lolly looked more naked from the neck up than below. Still it was our Loll okay, right here and dead, and no mistake. She looked (I hate to embarrass her by saying this) like a hick, but dearer to us for that. We could not leave our darling's last appearance to the whim of some old male mortician, be he a sissy or not. We couldn't let Loll down, not after all she'd done to put our Medium looks up on the map as Excellent. So, wordless as good elves, us five set to work upon Lolly's nails and hair. We'd come prepared. Royalty, she was to us that night, and not just some climbsome Duchess, either. We are talking Queen, full-out. Me, Estelle and Lessie divided Lolly's hair into sections and we each did our part just great, consulting the others of course, but silently. What's odd—our final tribute to Lolly made her look plain but regular and nice as we were, basically. We used all the tricks we'd learned from seeing her hands help us in her encouraging mir-

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rors. But we'd never got the hang of her Biograph Girl flare. We found we'd wreathed her head in a humble halo of final softening pin-curls, a conservative do, but sweet with symmetry, a decent hairstyle that covered her local ears whilst staying innocent of movies. She suddenly looked like we had always known her to be, deep deep underneath her quick-change Gingerish glamor. And once we'd brushed her out good, Estelle said, (I think it was Estelle), "Lollie, just consider this a long beauty rest. Loll, honey, you finally look like somebody's wife."

We cried then, holding hands around the brushed steel table and Loll there on it, cold and gossipless but neat. We cried for her, for ourselves, and for ourselves without her, Lord.

That was hard, losing Inner Glow Headquarters, losing Inner Glow's inventor and its doctor in us each. Oh, child, but her passing took its toll on local looks.—In time, even our husbands noticed.

I still feel it, though I'm far past even Lolly's help.

Let's us praise the ones that work for peanuts, beautifying.

Lately, here in my room, I'll admit this secret: I've started muttering to God a lot. I get so few visitors. Though I doubt it very much, they say He's everywhere (which includes, democratically, right here). I keep Him posted: mostly with complaints. I tell him: This winter we had no winter, little rain, no snow—Last summer was the worst in my long memory for scorch and parch and crackled ditches. Candystripers read me newspapers that are thirsty-making with news of how the milk of human kindness is drying up so quick and terrible and, Lord? listen up, because I got three words for you, ones learned off one of your choicer handmaids, ever. Heavenly Father: It's high time, so start. Get with Lolly's program, Lord: Moisturize, Moisturize, Moisturize.

Amen.

Naturally curly, world without end.

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Two Poems by Jack Barrack

Moving In

The suddenly bought land
Was stilled in its habits. Indians
Too light-fingered for events
Gently enlarged the wind. A wad of stone
Cheeked the field where cows
Peeled off like cut-outs from the green.

Now they'll be acres, mulchable grids
Like realtors' shadow-plays
Frozen in the sun. How newsworthy
These oaks and maples will become,
Their boles rising from seepage
Natural to each address. The World at Six
Will blue the lowest branches,
And we make confederates of the fields.

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A Fish's Head

It rested on dried sea-hair matting the rocks,
Its mouth a gash of deep disapproval. It stared and stared,
A clouded celluloid look, a carved stillness
Lopped away from ingot-flash and sea-whip,
The living flick in bent shoulders of waves
Flopping spineless now below the stinking head.

My eyes lifted the head and flung it
Far out to sea, where it drained watercolor thoughts
I painted there, a stain of words that swirled into fish.
They raced through liquid shingles of light the sun
glanced down.
Bodiless the head lashed back, and with reversed grin
Refused the afterlife I granted. It returned to the rocks
And fell with a smack, where for two days
It had shaped its death without me, and reached
perfection.

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Laurie Sheck

Rush Hour

These are the objects, the touchable—table, refrigerator,
chair,
grease-splattered whiteness and woodgrain.
And here is the sound of the baby muttering and cooing,
background noise, static, the swish of cars outside
flashing by like an anger in the brain,
and the red-white-and-blue license plates with their
picture of Lady Liberty—
she's holding up her torch
as she's swept on above the muddy roadway. What story
would you see

peering into these lit windows? —
Mother and child, the fragile solidities
against the white wall, and the calendar where two bison
hunch like breathing hills
at the edge of the Firehole River, in the snow,
as the river, all slowness, all certitude, gleams and pools
where it widens
round and smooth as handcuffs. The child is holding up a
raisin
box, the mother turning from the child to the window
to the child. And the noise of the radio blurring

tomorrow's weather and the stockmarket's closing, the
traffic report
that lingers there, hanging in her mind, until she sees
the slowed bunched cars bumper to bumper in the miles,
headlights on, stuck there and stuck there, and the
featureless

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trapped heads of the commuters staring through the small
strict windshields and the windows on either side where
they can see
the gulls scavenging the landfill, and beyond that the
smokestacks,
the metal-choked junkyards, the white aspirin-shaped oil
drums
dotting the brown land. And in that noise, the child, all
alone,

is leaning where the mother cannot follow,
into that separateness, that gash
where the world opens,
where pain and fear and beauty open. She leans and leans
in the sick fluorescent light, refrigerator hum, the clicking
of the oven as it cools. She can't
walk yet, she can't talk or even crawl.
So this is what it means to be *all eyes*
the mother thought in the blurred early days when she
first held her,
this body that must learn to love the world
looking out at it with all of its small being, leaning in to
where
all sound and shape and harm must smear itself,
a stain, onto the skin. The newborn child didn't even
know

that it had hands; to look was all it knew of reaching.
And the world leaned its otherness down over it, blur of
fragments
shifting and dividing, the audible grown loud then hushed
to a sound much less than softness. . . .
What the child saw then were the strange shifting shapes
that were the faces; mouths, eyes,

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appearing, disappearing, light, light, and the darkness
splintering, wavering, unowned.
That's what she's leaning into now, the mother thinks,
that slurring she cannot imprison, cannot catch—
that splintering that will seep into her being
year by year by year, in the dark wordless place of her
unknowing,
until one day she feels it rooting there and feels how it has
claimed her,
and one day she will name it, calling it her body and her
soul.

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Two Poems by Marjorie Welish

From Street Cries

1

Trees, good new trees, trees that are stitched
into tinware by the sun.

Tanned arms sweep around a pin;
the tanned arms of someone grow and wane.

This roof takes three times as long as leather
to deliberate, to settle over the houses,

but hospitality takes three times longer,
longer than the thong of leather I had made for you.

A walnut is of two minds, touch and go.
Here, the gong of the street cries scouring the street:

will you hear it,
will you wear it?

Will you wear this gaping mask? With childlike arms?
Will you buy this broom, this candle with its mask?

These powerful arms that sweep? The arms that grow
like a tan, or the arms that grow and tan

and wane into a variant of leisure?
What work do you have?

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6

Insects are good creatures, bells dazzle.
Flying insects paste themselves to streetlights.
Splash knives on marble. Ashes, ashes for example.

Splash knives on marble to obtain a reply
from the ladies and gentlemen interwoven.
Paste chutes under ladders, paste napkins to bells.

Won't you buy a few sprigs of rosemary
from ladies interwoven like self-abolishing lace?
Splash knives on marble; ashes, ashes for example.

Ladders leap to the chimney,
spread the word. Insects fly fast through spaces
arranged by ladders; bells dazzle.

I wish you a child pulling a pull-toy
and all increase. All increased
like knives on marble. Shove, stab and fall

across the human family
who has commenced to extinguish itself.
Paste chutes to ladders, paste napkins to bells,
splash knives on marble: ashes, ashes, for example.

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Two Poems by Christopher Benfey

Cutting My Niece's Nails

I hold my brother's daughter in my lap
and clip her fingernails. She sits expectant
and will not be distracted from the unfolding
drama of her thumbs: there half-moons rise
behind each cuticle and sickle moons
sail down.

She has learned to count
her years upon the fingers of one hand.
She points to the German twins etched on the handle
of the clippers. "Your moon's in Gemini," I murmur.
"Gemini who?" she says, pulling away
one hand and offering me the other hand.

Her nails curl back like the spiralling horns of a ram.
(I've strayed into a dream of stars and signs.)
"But Aries is your nemesis." She smiles
at her uncle's silly words.

I finger my handiwork and find it good
here where the growth is quickest, and I file
the close-cropped curves and edges till she squirms
to be released.

Now I sit in the quiet
bedroom and cut my own. I've heard it said
that in the final stillness of the grave
the obstreperous fingernails go right on growing.

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A Broken Bowl

It was probably Persian and certainly blue—
the bowl with patterned birds on the coffee table.
With a twist of the vacuum hose I broke it in two,
then broke the news as gently as possible
to my wife. Her face seemed to say that someone had died
helpless, adored, and small. I wondered whether
she thought I'd done it on purpose. So I tried
five ways to join the pieces back together,
cheap methods first, then more elaborate;
I held edge to broken edge in a vise but the glue
wouldn't hold, then stayed up through the following night
plotting new ways of union. Today I threw
the fragments in the trash. We'll buy more bowls.
A marriage can afford to be spendthrift with its symbols.

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ISABEL: Then why is he dead?

THAMI: You must stop asking those questions now Isabel.

You know the answers.

ISABEL: They dont make sense Thami. I think I'll be asking that 'why' for the rest of my life

THAMI: I know what you are feeling.

Blinded by his own sense of loss. ISABEL: (cruel exaggeration) You do?

THAMI: (sternly) Yes! I do.

(pause)

I also loved him.

Doesn't help much to say it now I know, but I did.

Because he made me angry and impatient with his "old-fashioned ideas", I didn't want to admit it. ~~until it was too late~~. It wouldn't have stopped me from doing what I did, the boycott and everything, but I ~~could~~ should have tried harder to make him understand why I was doing it. You were right about that. I'll never forgive myself for not trying harder with him and letting him know how ~~I was fucking for him~~ ~~desperately~~. Right until the end I tried to deny it ... to him, to myself.

Never? (helpless gesture) You know the most terrible words in your language Isabel? Too late.

ISABEL: Are the police really looking for you?

THAMI: Yes. Some of my friends have already been detained.

They're pulling in everybody.

ISABEL: Where are you going? Cape Town? That's the first place they'll look.

THAMI: No. I've written to my parents telling them about everything. I'm heading north.

ISABEL: To where?

THAMI: Far Isabel. Far.

And you?

ISABEL: I've stayed home these past few days. I dont know what to do with myself Thami.

A manuscript page from a draft of Athol Fugard's recently completed play "My Children, My Africa."

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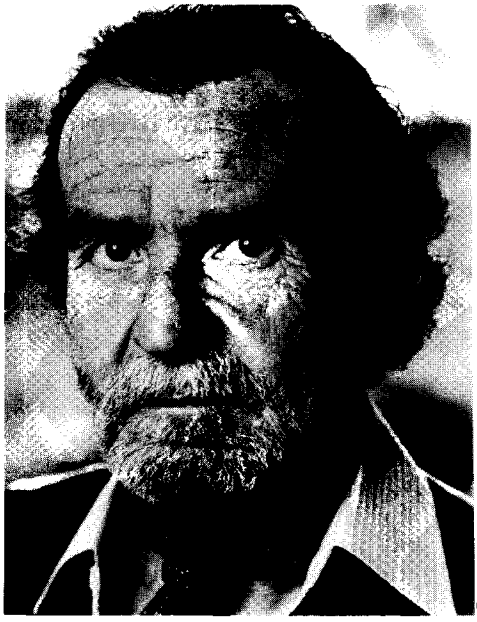

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The Art of Theater VIII

Athol Fugard

Athol Fugard was born in the small village of Middleburg in South Africa's semi-desert region of Karroo in 1932. His mother was an Afrikaner and his father an English-speaking South African. When Fugard was three years old the family moved to Port Elizabeth, the setting of most of his plays and his primary home ever since.

Fugard spent three years studying philosophy and social anthropology at the University of Cape Town. He dropped out before getting his degree, hitchhiked through Africa for six months and spent two years as a seaman in the Far East. Al-

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though he says he always knew he would be a writer, it was not until his return from the Far East, when he met the actress Sheila Meiring, that he became involved in the theater.

The two were married in 1956, and together they started an experimental theater group for which they wrote most of the material. In 1958 they moved to Johannesburg, where Fugard took a job as a clerk in a Native Commissioner's Court—the court which adjudicates violations of the passbook endorsements which determine where South Africans, both black and white, may live, work and travel. "During my six months in that courtroom," Fugard wrote, "I saw more suffering than I could cope with. I began to understand how my country functions."

Several years later, Fugard wrote The Bloodknot, *his first major play, which opened at the Rehearsal Room in Johannesburg on October 23, 1961. Its characters, Morris and Zachariah, are "colored" brothers born of mixed-race parents. Morris, who was played by Fugard, is light-skinned; Zach, played by Zakes Mokae, is dark-skinned. At the time of the opening, and for the duration of the play's six-month South African tour in 1962, it was permissible under South African law to produce a play with a racially integrated cast before non-segregated audiences. Shortly after the show closed, legislation was passed into law to prohibit this.*

Fugard's work has never been censored in South Africa, despite his volatile treatment of apartheid. His passport was, however, taken away for several years, from June 1967 until 1971, when the government returned it on a restricted basis, enabling him to direct a production of Boesman and Lena *in London. Since then he has acted and directed widely on Broadway, at the Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven and in London as well as in Europe.* A Lesson from Aloes *won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play in 1981;* "MASTER HAROLD" . . . and the boys *won the Drama Desk Award in 1982 and the Standard Award for Best Play in 1983. Most recently,* The Road to Mecca *won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1988. His other plays include* Hello and Goodbye *(1965) and* Sizwe Bansi is Dead *(1972), the*

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latter written in collaboration with John Kani and Winston Ntshona. He has published one novel, Tsotsi *(1980), and his* Notebooks 1960/1977 *was published in 1983. Fugard has been awarded honorary degrees from many universities, including Yale and the University of Cape Town.*

This interview was conducted in front of an audience, under the auspices of The Poetry Center of the 92nd Street YMHA on October 13, 1985. At the time, the twenty-five-year anniversary revival of Fugard's play The Bloodknot *was playing on Broadway. The interviewer was Fugard's longtime friend and collaborator Lloyd Richards, Artistic Director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. Richards described their working relationship: "Athol will call me and say, 'Let's have a cup of coffee.' We usually pick the cheapest restaurant we can find, one that still has paper napkins. We get together and order a cup of coffee. 'Okay, what is it?' I ask him. Athol tells me the title of the play, and the story of the play, and I know that there is not a word on paper yet. Then I say, 'Let's do it in such-and-such a month. Is that okay?' 'Fine,' he says, and we write the title and the date of the play on a napkin and that is our contract."*

INTERVIEWER

When did you realize that you wanted to become a writer? Was there some precipitating event, or did it grow naturally out of a commitment to literature?

ATHOL FUGARD

There was no one moment, but you could see it growing. You can see it in *"MASTER HAROLD"... and the boys*—that gauche young schoolboy playing around with words. Young Hallie talking about what would be a good title for a novel, thinking about writing a short story. From early on there were two things that filled my life—music and storytelling, both of them provoked by my father. He was a jazz pianist and also a very good storyteller, an avid reader. He passed both those interests on to me. Thoughts about being a concert pianist or a composer started to fall away from about the age of fifteen.

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By eighteen, by the time I went to university, I knew that somehow my life was going to be about putting words on paper. Originally I thought I was going to write the great South African novel, then poetry, and only when I was twenty-four or five did the thought of theater come into my head. That obviously relates to my meeting my wife Sheila, who, when I met her, was an out-of-work actress.

INTERVIEWER

What is your reason for writing?

FUGARD

Well, it's a convergence of two things. I can't think of a single one of my plays that does not represent a coincidence between an external and an internal event. Something outside of me, outside even my own life, something I read in a newspaper or witness on the street, something I see or hear, fascinates me. I see it for its dramatic potential. That external event affords me the opportunity to deal with what has been building up inside me. For example, the writing of *The Bloodknot.* I remember the genesis of that, even though it happened twenty-five years ago. I am singularly prone to that most human of all diseases—guilt. I've had my fair measure of it. But the image that generated *The Bloodknot* had absolutely nothing to do with the racial situation in South Africa. The seminal moment was my returning home late one night and going into the room where my brother was sleeping. My brother is a white man like myself. I looked down at him, and saw in that sleeping body and face, all his pain. Life had been very hard on him, and it was just written on his flesh. It was a scalding moment for me. I was absolutely overcome by my sense of what time had done to what I remembered as a proud and powerful body. I saw the pain: that is the seminal image in *The Bloodknot.*

INTERVIEWER

And that translated into the injection of race and whiteness?

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FUGARD

I was trying to examine a guilt more profound than racial guilt—the existential guilt that I feel when another person suffers, is victimized, and I can do nothing about it. South Africa afforded me the most perfect device for examining this guilt without going into the area of the absurd as Ionesco did by giving a man a rhinoceros's horn.

INTERVIEWER

Can you describe the conjunction of external and internal events in *A Lesson from Aloes*?

FUGARD

The external provocation is very simple: I got to know an Afrikaner in Port Elizabeth who had been committed to the struggle for decency and dignity and human rights, but who was suddenly suspected of being a police informer. His name was Piet. Piet's story gave me a chance to deal with the fact that you cannot simply dispose of the Afrikaner as the villain in the South African situation. If that's the only sense you have of the Afrikaner in South Africa at this moment, your thinking is too naive, and you are never really going to understand what is happening in that country. You'll never understand how we landed in the present situation or what's going to come out of it. The terrible and challenging thing about the Afrikaner is his complexity: he is not just bad; there's good as well. The case of Piet Bezuidenhout occurred at a time when I was ready to put an Afrikaner—not a hero, but a survivor—up on the stage. That was my internal provocation.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you use the symbol of aloes? I have an image of the aloe as tangled in the roots of South Africa. It can either be strangled, or survive to produce a flower. . . .

FUGARD

Yes, I think the aloe is one of South Africa's most powerful, beautiful and celebratory symbols. It survives out there in the

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wild when everything else is dried. At the end of one of our terrible recurrent droughts, the aloe is still there.

INTERVIEWER

You once told a story about being in England for a while and saying you had to go back to South Africa because you could not look at the people on the street and identify where they had come from. . . .

FUGARD

That is true. That one little corner of South Africa, Port Elizabeth and its immediate surroundings, is a region which I know like the back of the hand which holds my pen as I write about it. I can stand on a street corner in Port Elizabeth, look at anybody and put together some sort of biography. I know where they come from, where they're going. I have a feel of the textures of their life. If I stand on a street corner in New Haven, which is a place I've gotten to know as well as any place outside of South Africa, I am still at a total loss to identify the people passing me on that street.

INTERVIEWER

Do you identify with Piet's inability to leave South Africa?

FUGARD

I don't think I could. Of course I'm saying this on American soil. I'm facing a few more months of work in this city, but at the end of it, I will be returning to South Africa. I would like to believe that if for some reason the situation deteriorated to the point where I was told, "If you leave South Africa, you can never come back," I'd stay there. There were periods in my life when I could have been seduced away. I am incredibly fortunate that the government took away my passport at the point when I was most open to seduction. With my passport gone, I could have left on a one-way ticket. But the issue was so starkly highlighted that I had no problem in saying, "No."

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INTERVIEWER

Why was your passport taken away?

FUGARD

I don't know. I think they identified me as a liberal. And in the late sixties a liberal was a dangerous animal. Liberals aren't dangerous animals anymore, so they don't hassle me too much. I know they open my mail, I know my telephone is tapped—but I have a passport, a perfectly normal passport. The likes of myself aren't seen as a threat to the establishment anymore. Now they have to deal with men and women who make bombs and set them off. Of course this could change—the government doesn't seem to pursue any sort of consistent policy. Their attitude toward me depends on how they feel when they wake up in the morning. Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, Andre Brink are as baffled by how and why the government does things as I am. There just doesn't seem to be any logic to it.

INTERVIEWER

What about the government and censorship?

FUGARD

I have never had trouble publishing my work in South Africa. Although there've been a couple of occasions when school authorities threw my books out of their libraries.

INTERVIEWER

That seems pretty serious to me. Don't you have any reservations about going back to a country where that sort of thing goes on?

FUGARD

No. Nobody can take what I love away from me. I would like to believe that love is the only energy I've ever used as a writer. I've never written out of anger, although anger has informed love. When I return, that love will still be there, even

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if the South Africa I go back to in five months' time is radically different from the one I left. I would like to believe that my absence from South Africa won't affect my relationship to that country, which has been the source of my inspiration, the soul of my writing.

INTERVIEWER

Is pain a part of that?

FUGARD

Yes. One wishes that pain weren't the potent alchemical element that it is.

INTERVIEWER

You tend, in your plays, to take a few crucial people, put them into a space and let them thrash out their lives. Is that a part of your own way of functioning?

FUGARD

Yes. How one human being deals with another remains the most critical fact in history. You can kill a man, or you can bless him. We all know about our potential to kill; we have dangerously lost sight of the fact that each of us can also bless.

INTERVIEWER

At the end of the last performance of *The Bloodknot* at the Yale Repertory Theatre, you and Zakes Mokae stood at the front of the stage, with the audience standing and applauding. You held hands and raised them. There was something about the event that was more than just the applause of an audience for a performance.

FUGARD

In my country there's an Athol Fugard trying to kill a Zakes Mokae at this very moment, and there's a Zakes Mokae who wants to kill an Athol Fugard. But Zakes and I were together on that stage.

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INTERVIEWER

Does hope still exist today? Where does it reside?

FUGARD

My faith in human nature, in the capacity to change, grows with every year. My faith in the essential goodness of life increases. Yet my faith in politics has withered.

INTERVIEWER

If you ever lost that sense of hope, would that be the moment at which writing became impossible? Could you write out of despair?

FUGARD

That would be a moment at which a lot of things would become impossible. I don't know what I would do with my life if I lost faith in human nature.

INTERVIEWER

What was the conjunction between the external event and the internal impetus with *"MASTER HAROLD" . . . and the boys*?

FUGARD

For fifteen years I kept thinking to myself, when am I going to get around to writing about those two extraordinary men, Sam and Willie, who were literally my closest and virtually my only friends for a period of my childhood. Suddenly one day I put a white boy, Hallie, in with them. There it was. I had it. I was locked in to the tensions, the polarity, the dynamic. I had the chance and the courage to deal with something that I had never dealt with in my life. The particular moment was the spitting event—Hallie spits in the black man's face. Before that I was convinced I'd created the necessary dynamic simply by putting Hallie in there with Sam and Willie, and that I could write the play without resorting to anything like the vulgarity of spitting on stage. I thought I could deal with all my

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problems, my guilts, and wash my dirty linen in a place of public entertainment without having to resort to that. But I just couldn't avoid it. The moment came: I wrote, "Hallie spits in Willie's face."

INTERVIEWER

How did you feel after that?

FUGARD

Well, there's a vulgar aspect to the craft. Even when you're dealing with the most private, intensely personal moment of pain, if you do it well enough, if you handle it correctly, you immediately pat yourself on the back. . . . I might as well be honest about it.

INTERVIEWER

Did the writing of the play absolve any feeling of guilt?

FUGARD

No, but it was necessary for me to deal with it, I've realized your life can be stained so deeply that you can never get rid of it. It's soaked into the fabric.

INTERVIEWER

What was the background of *The Road to Mecca*? Was it guilt?

FUGARD

No, quite different. An extraordinary sculptress, Helen Martins, lived in the little village in the Karroo where my house is. For twenty-two years of her life, starting at the age of fifty, she handed herself over to an incredible creative energy. She sculpted away, single-mindedly, with a total obsession. Then, mysteriously, her creativity dried up and she committed suicide. From time to time I'd say to myself, "Come on, deal with it. You're a writer; this is extraordinary." But I kept pushing her aside. Then her story became such an urgent reality inside me, I needed to examine it. *The Road to Mecca*

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focuses on the possibility that creative energy can exhaust itself, probably the most frightening reality an artist can face. Every artist lives in total fear of that—I know I do. I kept wondering whether, with an act of terrible prescience, in describing the end of Helen Martins's creative energy, I was in fact writing my own epitaph.

INTERVIEWER

Is *The Road to Mecca* your favorite play?

FUGARD

I think every writer has a special relationship with his most recent work. In my case that would be *The Road to Mecca*. Firstly, the process of writing it, creating it, the traumas or difficulties that you live through in order to get it written—those are close to you still. Also the most recent play says something about where you are in your life. It still needs a certain protection; it is very young. Its life has just been started, and you feel very paternal about it. *The Bloodknot* is also a very recent experience in my life, but I see it primarily as the work which launched my career in theater, the work in which I found my own voice for the first time. *A Lesson from Aloes* has a very special meaning for me because it was the first play I wrote after two or three agonizing years of writer's block, when I just couldn't get anything down on paper.

INTERVIEWER

How does a play come from you as a craftsman? How do you write?

FUGARD

I write by dealing with what I lovingly describe as the inquisition of blank paper—lovingly despite the terror that it's had for me in the past, and no doubt will continue to have in the future. My most important tool is my notebook. I've been a bit careless these past two or three weeks, but even while producing *The Bloodknot* at Yale, I spent a few minutes with it

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every day. I jot down random images, thoughts, ideas, speculations, and a little bit of personal misery. It's a five-finger exercise. Every one of my plays started off a long time before the actual writing took place as an image in those notebooks. There comes a point when one of these images from the past, such as Sam or Piet or Helen Martins, presents itself again. If it is the right moment, and if, as I tried to describe earlier, there is a coincidence between the external and the internal, the things start happening. First I just free associate. It's almost as if the seminal image has a certain magnetic power of its own which helps me focus on the things of daily living that relate to it. This is the first step. It usually results in an accumulation of ideas, scraps of dialogue, rough structures for scenes and a mass of paper. I can lift up that paper and feel its weight metaphorically and think, "Yeah, there's enough here now." Next it's got to be ordered and organized. I never actually start to write a play—by that I mean put "1" up at the top of a blank sheet of paper and open a bracket for my first stage direction—until I have completely structured the play. I have never started to write a play without knowing with total certainty what my final image is. Other writers work differently, I know. They say, "Oh, the material did this to me, I got surprised, it sent me off in a different direction." That has never happened to me. While it may be a flaw, I am absolutely brutal about my disciplining of the material before I write the words "page one" and get to work.

INTERVIEWER

When you begin to write, does the dialogue flow in your head as you write it down?

FUGARD

It's a very slow and painful process. I'm very conscious of how faltering the first few steps are, how much stalling and drowning in the blankness of paper there is. Nothing flows in my head. There have been occasions when I've found my head working away quite energetically with my hand a foot behind, watching in amazement. But there have never been sustained

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outpourings. If I've got three full pages done, longhand, that's a good day. That's a damn good day in fact. Sometimes there is nothing, or what I have written goes into the wastepaper basket. I tear up and throw away furiously when I write. I don't accumulate a lot of paper. For something to stay on paper longer than two days it has to pass some very critical tests. I usually work through three drafts, longhand, in the course of writing a play; it takes about nine months.

INTERVIEWER

Are your plays ever revised during rehearsal? Do you know how good a line or a scene is before you hear it spoken, or is your ear so developed that there's no need to revise?

FUGARD

I've had varying experiences. Some plays have gone through rehearsal and ended up on the stage without even so much as the punctuation having changed. Others have benefited substantially from the rehearsal process. Sometimes the actors have made me aware, in the course of the rehearsal process, of moments that needed fleshing out and points that hadn't been made strongly enough.

INTERVIEWER

What, do you feel, is the relationship of a playwright to politics?

FUGARD

I think it varies. There are as many answers to that as there are playwrights. It is a facile, glib thing to say—but I think I am fortunate in that my relationship to politics is resolved very simply: I come from a country which is so highly politicized that there is no act, even the most private you can think of, which does not resonate politically. Obviously when it comes to the question of telling stories about other people's lives in a situation as political as South Africa, you get to be political. So political commitment isn't really something I've had to look for; it was an automatic by-product of my being

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a storyteller—one who is going to try to tell stories truthfully and through them bear witness to the South African situation. Talking with young students at Yale recently, I was asked whether I agreed with a fellow South African writer—I am going to be cowardly and not name that writer—who said that all writers in that country had an obligation to make a political stand. I got angry about this because I don't think any writer should presume to give orders to another. The place from which you take your orders is probably the most secret place you have. If you have a word like "God" in your vocabulary, then that is an area in which you and God deal with each other. So, no writer must ever presume to tell another writer what his or her political responsibilities are. It is a poet's right in South Africa to write a poem which seemingly has no political resonance.

INTERVIEWER

Is the duty of a playwright in South Africa to his society different than the duty of an American to his?

FUGARD

I don't think so. This is really just a way of asking about the relationship of the artist to his society. Some writers do nothing but talk about the objective moral obligations that artists must live up to. If you're Brecht, you're going to write as Brecht writes; you're going to be as committed as Brecht. There may be pale imitations, but there will only be one Brecht. Every artist does as he needs to. There is a desperate tendency to try to legislate artists, to try to lay down rules for their obligations to society. Just leave artists alone. If you are a true artist, you will have a very finely tuned moral mechanism. If you're a Georgia O'Keeffe, a Bertolt Brecht or a Harold Pinter, you'll do it your way.

INTERVIEWER

You have chosen not to leave your country, for various reasons. Do you consider yourself, even there, in exile to any extent? How does exile fit into your art, or does it?

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FUGARD

Exile is a phenomenon I have watched with morbid curiosity over the years because it is a fate that has befallen a lot of my friends. It is something I have watched but not experienced. I do not consider myself to be in exile. I could play around with words and say that I consider myself an exile from the society that I believe South Africa should be, but that's just being clever. No, I don't really know what exile means.

INTERVIEWER

You said your faith in politics has withered. How did this happen?

FUGARD

My faith in politics and politicians has withered, but as I was saying my faith in human nature grows stronger. But politicians screw up so often now—when did we last have a decent statesman? Let's not even talk about South Africa; let's look at America, England. Where's the statesmanship? The mess is global. My skepticism is something that has come with experience, a certain world-weariness as I have looked at the past decades. The world wasn't getting better. I don't think the moral tone of the Western world has significantly improved in the fifty-odd years that I've been alive. Technologically it has, but morally it damn sure hasn't.

INTERVIEWER

How do you feel the role of art in bringing about social change compares to that of politics and persuasion?

FUGARD

Art has a role. Art is at work in South Africa. But art works subterraneanly. It's never the striking, superficial cause and effect people would like to see. Art goes underground into people's dreams and surfaces months later in strange, unexpected actions. People bring a sort of instant-coffee expectation to art; they'd like the results to be immediate. It doesn't work that way. I like that image of art dropping down through the

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various layers of the individual's psyche, into dreams, stirring around there and then surfacing later in action.

INTERVIEWER

In a recent article you spoke about the role of alcohol in your life, and its subsequent absence. Does alcohol open up new channels of access to the muse? How was your work affected when you quit drinking?

FUGARD

Oh God, I'm only too prepared to talk about that. For a long time I thought that drinking had a great influence on my imagination. Not that I've used alcohol at any of the few desks where I've done my writing; I've always sat down at my desk very sober, but alcohol was there as a part of my life. Especially at night, after a day working, I used to enjoy my whiskeys, my wines, my beer. And then with the last carafe at night I brainstormed, putting down ideas for the next day. It was a critical aspect of my writing cycle and it led me to believe that if I decided to give up drinking I would end up not writing any longer. I won't go into the circumstances that led me to give up drinking, except that obviously one of the reasons was the recognition that I would become an alcoholic. Another was its effect on relationships that were very important to me. Anyway, one day three-and-a-half years ago I decided to stop. In the course of that time I have written *The Road to Mecca* and directed it in South Africa, America and London. I also returned to the anniversary production of *The Bloodknot* with Zakes Mokae, which started at Yale and ended up on Broadway. The three-and-a-half years prove I can get on with a creative life even though I don't drink. I must confess that I had moments of unbelievable terror, fear and panic, with the devil inside me trying to persuade me that the reason that I hadn't done any writing that day was that I hadn't been able to get any drinking in; that the real reason the rehearsal had gone so badly and I hadn't gotten any sleep and had a headache was because I wasn't drinking; that I had made a mess of a number of critical moments in the past several years while honoring my

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resolve to stay sober. Fortunately, I was able to resist those low moments. Starting three-and-a-half years ago, life has become a most extraordinary adventure. I didn't ever believe I would have such a sense of rebirth, of rediscovery.

INTERVIEWER

Would you share with us what your family means to you as a writer, and how your relationship with your family either facilitates, implements or impedes your work? I ask this knowing that your wife Sheila was in the theater before you were.

FUGARD

Yes, and now Sheila is a novelist. Theater didn't turn out to be what she wanted to do. Prose and poetry have become her life. We have lived together as two writers. The marriage has survived on the basis of one absolute rule: total privacy. It came about quite unconsciously, without any fuss; we never addressed ourselves to the issue. I think two writers living together can be dangerous. I never know what Sheila is writing, what her novel is about, until the first copy comes from the publisher. And she, by and large, knows nothing about the play that I'm working on until she sits down in a preview or a first-night audience. We exchange sighs of relief or groans of despair at the end of the day, but it's as general as that. They are noises, like two draft animals stabled together, blowing and groaning away. That makes the work possible. Obviously, there is incredible mutual respect and support. And Lisa, my daughter, is very inspirational. I think that she's a major reason for a lot of what I do.

INTERVIEWER

You have been at once both the playwright and the director. Is the relationship between these two roles an easy one?

FUGARD

It started out of economic necessity. The blunt and simple reality was that twenty-five years ago, when I wrote *The Blood-knot*, nobody in South Africa wanted to touch it. If I hadn't

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got hold of Zakes, whom I had already known from some previous work we had done in the theater, and said, "Let's do it," and then tried to sort out the traffic on the stage—in addition to taking on the role of Morris—the play wouldn't have got done. It was the same with *Hello and Goodbye*, *People are Living There*, *Boesman and Lena*, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *The Island* and *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*. I only started enjoying the luxuries so taken for granted in the American theater when I came to Yale. I had never had designers in my life. I had never had dramaturges—I'm still trying to discover what to do with that animal; what do you *do* with a dramaturge? I think they are asking themselves that question as well. God knows I have no conceits as a director. Someone has to organize the traffic. That's what I do: I see that people don't bump into each other on the stage. I look after the six-foot rule.

INTERVIEWER

Forgive me, what is the six-foot rule?

FUGARD

The six-foot rule is that no two actors must come nearer to each other than six feet unless there is a crisis. Get closer than six feet and you've got a crisis in the action. So I organize the traffic. I also understand the text, because I wrote it. With those two contributions to the event, I have discharged my responsibilities as a director.

INTERVIEWER

Would you lose a certain amount of the autonomy you feel as a writer if you turned a play over to another director?

FUGARD

I've no experience with that. I make very certain that I handle the first productions of the play in South Africa, in London and in New York. When those three events are behind me, I cut the umbilical cord, and the play looks after itself. Once or twice I've dropped in on other productions of my work

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and had varying experiences—some good, some bad, quite a few indifferent. I've no working relationship with other directors and I think it will probably stay that way.

INTERVIEWER

What about the experience of acting in your own plays? When you're writing do you have it in mind that certain words will be for you to speak?

FUGARD

I'm glad I'm an actor. I'm glad I've had acting experience, because I think it has sharpened my craft as a playwright. Acting has made the writer realize what actors need up there on stage to make a moment work. I feel that's the reason actors have such a good time with my plays—they often tell me they do. I often think of my plays as being written with three characters sitting at the desk: the writer himself, and then behind his left shoulder is the actor, watching as he writes and nudging his arm, and behind the other shoulder is the director who's eventually going to be responsible for the staging of it. There's a triple psychology that functions when I write a play. I don't want to become too conscious of this aspect of my writing in case it interferes with its progress, but it seems there is a three-pronged attack on the blank paper when I sit down to write a play.

INTERVIEWER

You said earlier that you gather your material before you set out to write. Could you talk a little about the plays that were worked on improvisationally?

FUGARD

My work with the actors during one stage of the rehearsals is for both rehearsing and improvising. With *The Island*, when I got together with John Kani and Winston Ntshona, I always came prepared with questions, ideas, provocations. This would set them up; they are both consummate personal storytellers who love acting out their lives. I fed them a constant stream

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of provocations relating to the central idea on which we had decided.

INTERVIEWER

How were John and Winston involved in the genesis of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*?

FUGARD

Yes, very simple, easy to talk about that. I had been working with John and Winston in an amateur context, a black drama group from New Brighton, the black ghetto of Port Elizabeth. They approached me one day and said that they wanted to turn professional. I listened to them with disbelief. At that point in South Africa's theater history, twelve years ago, the notion that a black man could earn a living being an actor in South Africa was just the height of conceit. But they were insistent, and so we looked around for a play for them to do. We couldn't find anything that really excited us, anything that I wanted to direct them in. Then John said, "Couldn't we *make* a play?" We tried various ideas, all of which petered out, and then I remembered something: it was a photograph I'd once seen in the display window of a pokey little backstreet photographer in Port Elizabeth, an extraordinary photograph of a man wearing what was obviously a new suit, seated on a chair, smiling broadly, a hat on his head. I think there was even an umbrella across his knees. In one hand he had a pipe and in the other a cigarette. It was an extraordinary photograph, a great celebratory moment captured by that backstreet photographer. I finally put this down as a mandate; I said to these chaps, "Come on now, for that chap to be smiling like that, he's got to have a reason. Maybe that's the story we're looking for. Maybe that's where our play lies." I asked them why he was smiling. Again it was John who said, "One reason why a black man smiles as broadly as you've suggested is if his reference book, his much-hated passbook, is in order, or if he's just managed to get some problem in connection with it sorted out." That was the start of it, that stupid question. In fact, the passbook does lie at the core of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. That

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question, and a whole series of others—all concerning the man in the blue suit with the umbrella, smiling at the camera, with the cigarette in one hand and a pipe in the other—was the start of *Sizwe Bansi*. He was our seminal image, I fed John and Winston constant provocations from what I knew about them and their lives. It was my job to take home whatever had happened in the rehearsal room and start shaping it. I used my craft to structure and define and dramatically shape what they had provided by way of raw improvisation. That was my process. I am a great believer in architecture, in structuring. It's my discipline.

INTERVIEWER

Can you talk about the original production of that play in Johannesburg? Was there censorship involved?

FUGARD

We felt that the play was far too dangerous for us to go public with it; there was the problem of mixed audiences. So we launched the play by underground performances to which people had to have a specific invitation—a legal loophole in the censorship structure in South Africa, and one we continued to exploit for many years. During our underground period, we had a lot of police interference. They rolled up once or twice and threatened to close us down, arrest us—the usual bully tactics of security police anywhere in the world. We just persisted, carried on and survived it. We eventually did go public with *Sizwe Bansi*, many years later, but only after it had played in London and New York. After that, we felt that the play's reputation protected us.

INTERVIEWER

What are some of the limits you perceive in the American theater? You spoke recently about the difficulties of producing an off-Broadway show.

FUGARD

Well, I could talk endlessly about the limits of Broadway

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theater. Broadway, oh God, what a pain! It is going through a long process of dying—it should just get on with the business and do it. Broadway's become one hell of a mess, but then Broadway isn't American theater. If Broadway wants to die, and if legitimate theater, straight theater, hasn't got a place on Broadway, well then good. Theater's flourishing out in the regions. I look around and all sorts of very exciting things are happening.

INTERVIEWER

Did you seek out a relationship with the New York theater world and the Yale Rep?

FUGARD

Not any more than any writer or playwright who tries to get his work done. When it gets done, you earn a living, you earn royalties, you can pay the rent. Fortunately American audiences and American actors go for the same sort of theater that I try to write. I don't think it's an accident that I earn eighty or ninety per cent of my living as a playwright in America. In England it's only about ten or fifteen per cent. The English don't tune in to my plays as strongly as American audiences and critics. This relationship between New York, American theater and myself is one which I'm very happy with and hope to continue.

INTERVIEWER

How has your relationship with Zakes changed through all this? What was it like working with a very unprofessional actor twenty-five years ago as opposed to the experienced actor he is now?

FUGARD

Oh, I've got a lovely answer to that question: I was as unprofessional as Zakes then. We both thought we were as good then as we think we are now. Zakes had seen five plays twenty-five years ago; I had seen six.

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INTERVIEWER

So the ego does not change.

FUGARD

The ego does not change. Now we've seen a dozen each.

—**Lloyd Richards**

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Three Poems by Elaine Equi

Surface Tension

1.

that feeling
of resignation
that comes
before change

2.

someone calls
and says
she has seen a body
flying through the air

maybe now
isn't a good time
to talk

3.

fuck shapes

4.

replace the narrative
with another
form of narrative

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5.

aping
the lush life

6.

the Hansel and Gretel
basement

the endless supply
of cookies

7.

the rarely seen
pistachio green

8.

privacy

9.

as another form of intimacy

10.

they call that
a sucker punch

11.

when a woman
walks toward you

the way she did

something happens

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12.

it's like mailing a letter

13.

you think of things
as co-ordinates

14.

you replace sleep
with pointing

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Being Sick Together

In the postmodern world
the sequel is always superior

to the original
and it is even possible

for someone like Tony Perkins
to meet a nice girl in "Psycho III"

a suicidal former nun
who is also tormented

by sexual fantasies
so that he can teach her something

old-fashioned as dancing
the fox trot

and she can offer him
a drink in her room.

At the Bates Motel
water drawn from the same tap

where famous shower scene began
now seems pleasantly refreshing.

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Invoice

Deliver boat
with mirrored oar
off veneer avenue.

Inflate dog.

Assemble teacup labyrinth.

Glue chair to wall.
Extend wall to accommodate
upscale sweep of eye
following curve.

Place egg
under pendulum timer.

Goldleaf ice.

Stuff pillows
in aquariums.

Fill coffins
with sand.

When guests arrive
ignore them.

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Portfolio

Studies for Package Deal 1956

Stuart Davis

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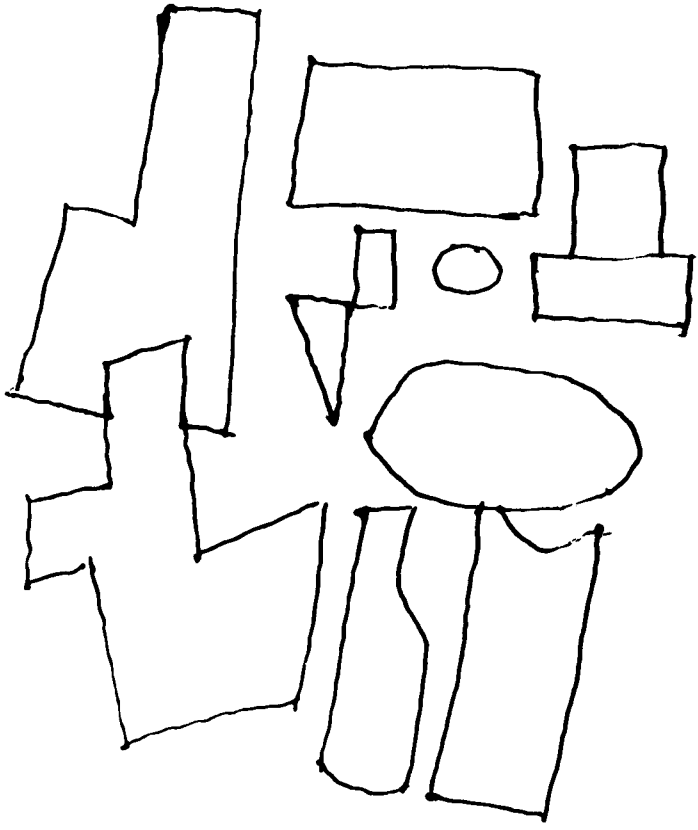

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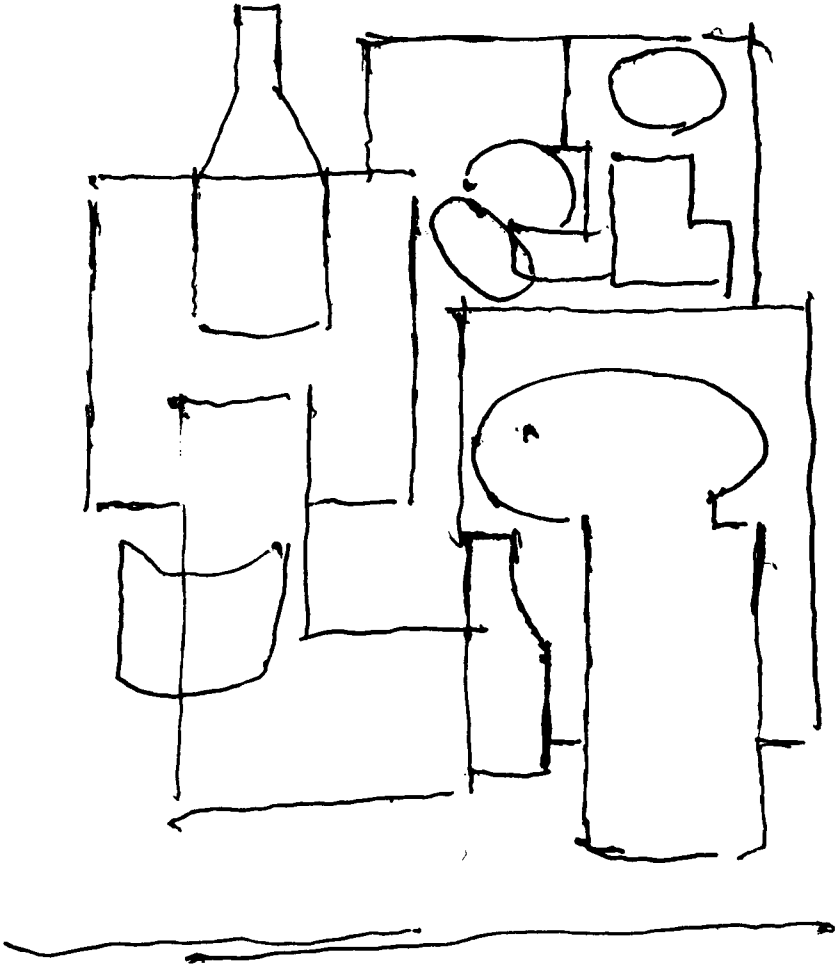

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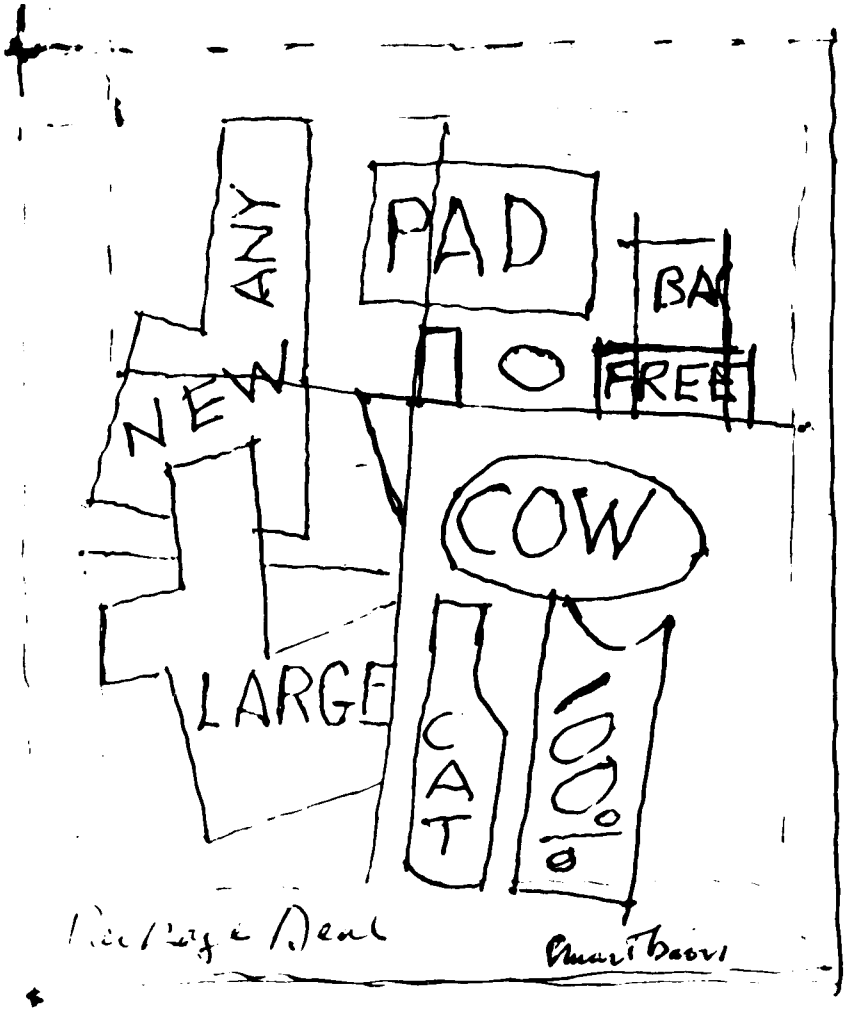

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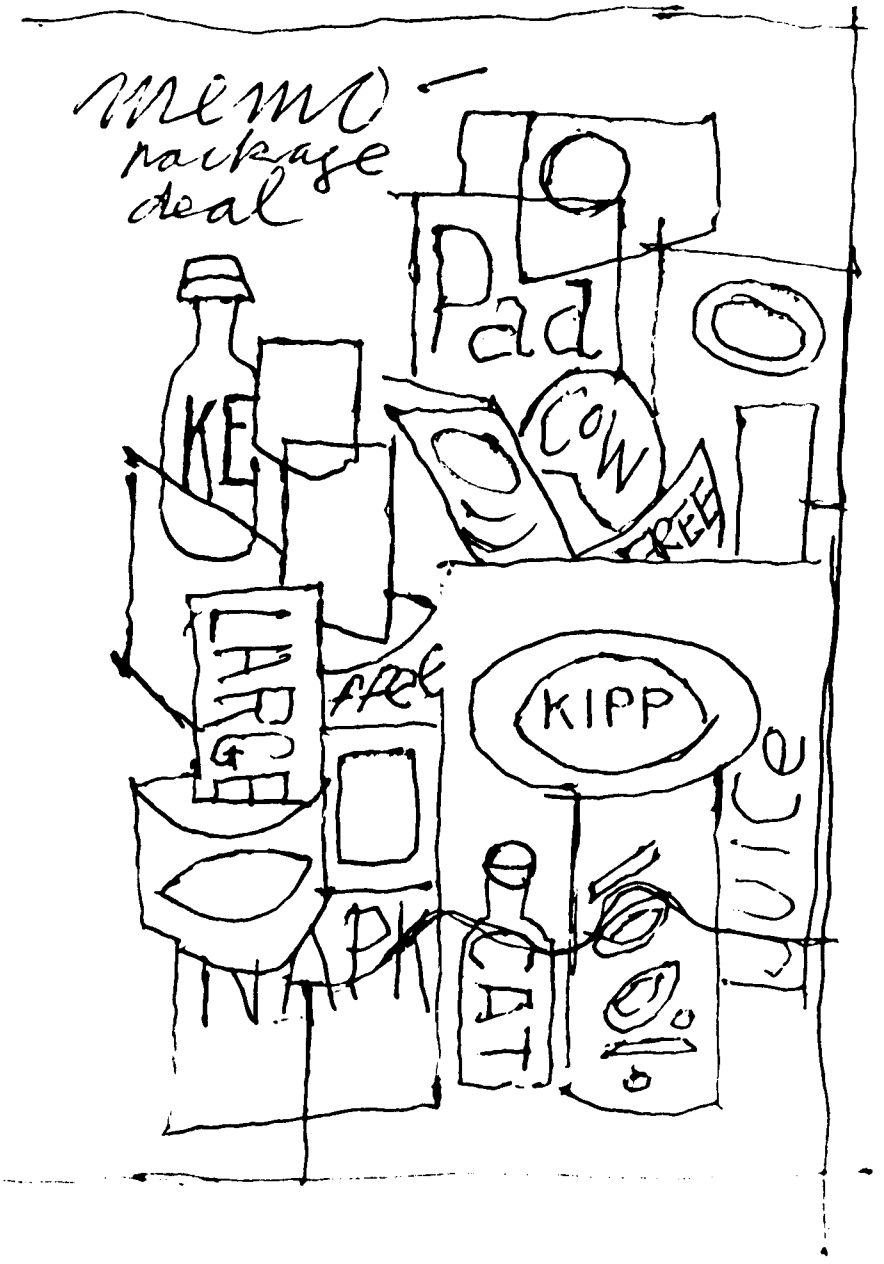

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Package Deal

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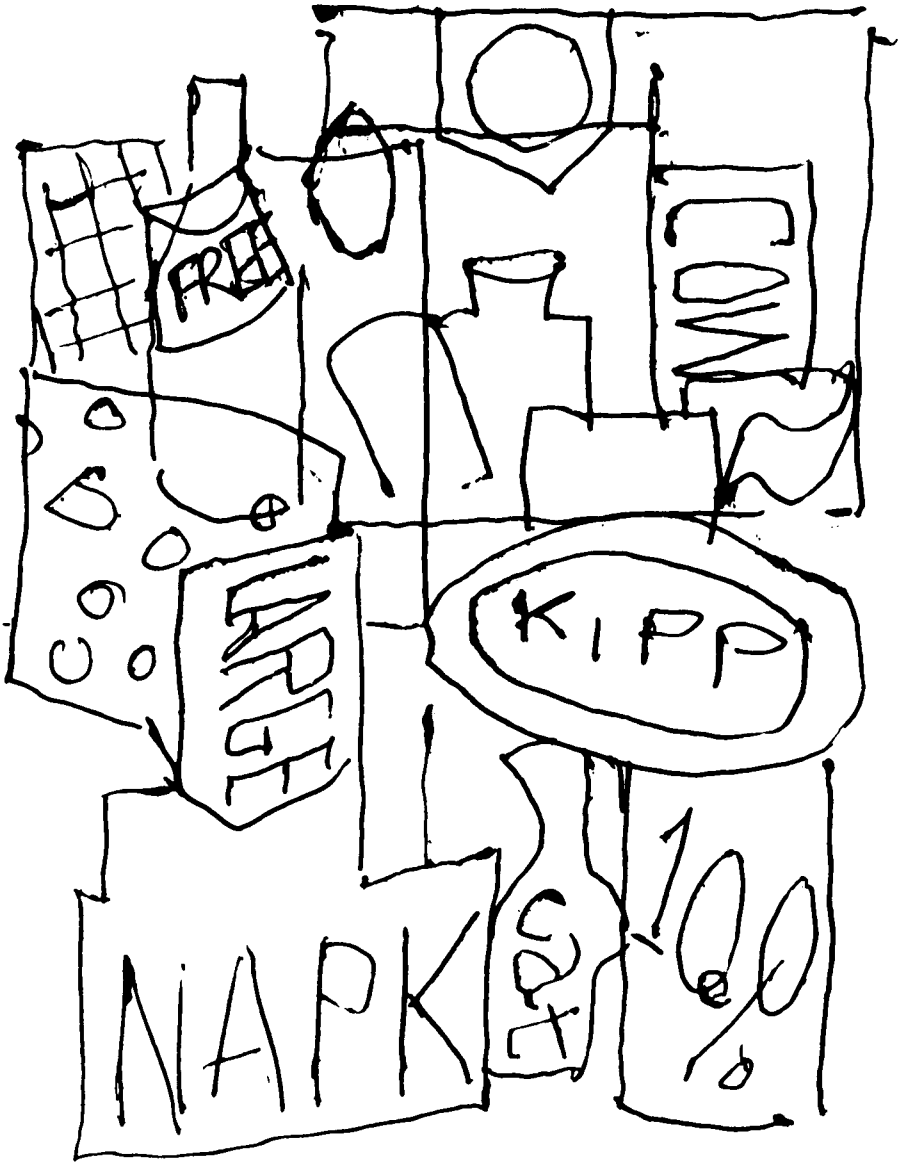

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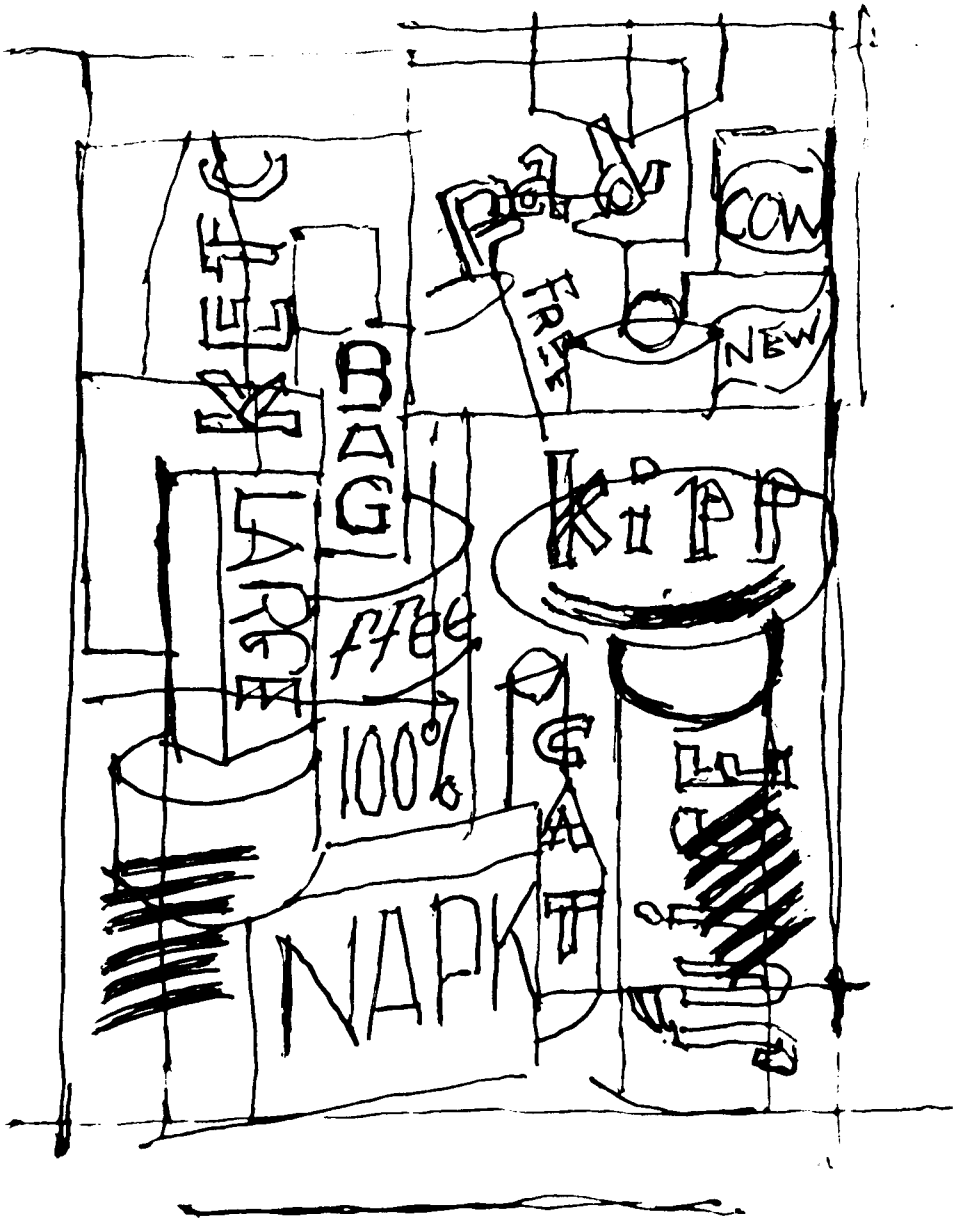

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A Piece of Pommerac

Odillo Antoni

By the sheer size of its audience, the Asian epic Ramayana *arguably ranks as the world's most popular story. Its oldest version is a Sanskrit poem attributed to the poet Valmiki and composed some two millennia ago, though the legend it tells may be considerably older and is set, according to Hindu belief, in the Second Age of the present cosmic cycle – hundreds of thousands of years in the past. Whatever its origin, the saga of Rama, an ideal prince unjustly exiled from his kingdom, whose wife is kidnapped by a powerful demon-king and who embarks on a hazardous quest to recover her assisted by talking monkeys and birds, has proven to have a timeless and far-reaching appeal. On the Indian subcontinent it has inspired more than 300 versions in dozens of languages, and it has also spread throughout Southeast Asia, Japan, China, and been carried by emigrant communities to Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. Most importantly, the* Ramayana *has survived primarily as an oral tradition, performed by countless storytellers, singers, folk players, puppeteers – a meta-story never exhaustively encompassed by any one text but always inspiring new and variant tellings.*

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Traditional Ramayana *authors know this, and their works are often highly reflexive, full of allusions to other versions and set within elaborate frames that give as much importance to the act and context of the telling as to the tale itself. The result is a story full of tellers, from the sage Valmiki who teaches his poem to the twin sons of the hero (they later sing it before Rama, who thus becomes part of the audience for his own story), to the monkey Hanuman—Rama's ally and one of the epic's most beloved characters—who delights in repeating the tale within the tale and becomes in time (through the boon of physical immortality) the special patron of all its tellers. Hanuman is also, by the way, a liminal figure who combines awesome power with a gift for slapstick: half-god and half-monkey, he leaps the sea to find Rama's wife in the demon's island citadel. After frolicking for centuries through the monkey lore of Southeast Asia, Hanuman easily bounded to the Americas (where he inspired Octavio Paz's novel* El Mono Gramático*) and established another beachhead among the East Indians of the Caribbean. Odillo Antoni, inspired in part by the Hindo-Afro-Hispano-American legends of his childhood, gives us another* Ramayana *retelling—by a teller with a tail.*

—Philip Lutgendorf

Divina Trace, *the novel-in-progress from which this excerpt is taken, is set in the Caribbean; there are seven narrators, each of whom offers a separate version of the story, told in distinct dialects according to their ethnic group. Magdalena is the principal character and narrator, and she provides the East Indian element of the novel. She is represented by a miraculous black madonna later in the book (inspired by Divina Pastora, the statute of a black virgin found in the cathedral of Siparia, a village of southern Trinidad), a madonna worshipped as both a Catholic saint and the Hindu goddess Kali. Magdalena tells her version of the story as a retelling of Valmiki's* Ramayana. *In the excerpt which follows, Hanuman, the monkey–*

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god and warrior of this epic, takes over the narration from Magdalena with his subplot of the monkey tribes. He speaks his own calypso-simian tongue (a language containing the names of over a hundred species of monkeys and prehistoric apes, together with all the major proponents and detractors of evolutionary theory). In the novel Hanuman is Valmiki's scribe, the monkey-writer, and reader, of his oral tale. His section falls precisely at the center of the novel; it provides a transition between the two halves of the book, which are constructed as mirror images, and it stands apart as an encapsulation of the novel as a whole.

*Hanuman's story opens with an assemblage of cheering monkeys: he delivers to Rama the child (*potto, *African lemur/*popo, *Caribbean slang for infant) of his stolen Queen Sita. The monkeys praise Rama and depart for the forest, where Hanuman and his king Sugriva will wait for Rama to lead them in recapturing Sugriva's kingdom and queen, both usurped by his royal brother Bali. Bored by the wait, Hanuman decides to go after Bali himself. To his dismay, however, he finds that Queen Tara has given herself willingly to Bali. Hanuman curses her as a whore; Tara retorts that he and Sugriva are weak men who know nothing of the ways of women. Hanuman delivers this message, which leaves Sugriva more distraught than ever, and then offers to obtain a sacred aphrodisiac (*bois bandé*) which will restore his king's slighted manhood. Fortified by the herb, Sugriva stands erect and takes his first steps as a biped: he invents the first tool, a* bootoo *(Caribbean slang for club), with which he kills Bali and reinstalls himself on the throne; and finding Tara pregnant, he rebukes her and banishes her from the kingdom. The monkeys take to the streets in celebration (*totem-tambo/tambour-bamboo, *early bands of bamboo instruments prior to the steel drum). That night, after drunken revelry, Hanuman dreams of the book he is transcribing and searches in it for the photograph of a male infant – his mysterious ancestor who is the link to his past – but only his own monkey-face appears on the page.*

Hanuman awakens with guilty feelings for having played a part in Tara's banishment. He vows to go to her (Tara has exiled herself in Valmiki's hermitage) and to ask her forgiveness.

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His knock is answered by a note slipped beneath Tara's door; it is written in Latin, which Hanuman cannot understand, and he goes in search of Valmiki to translate it for him. Hanuman cannot find his old teacher, so he decides to translate the note himself using Valmiki's dictionaries. The note is Tara's suicide letter, and it reveals that he, Hanuman, is to deliver her child at the hour of her death. He returns to find Tara in the throes of death and childbirth. After attempting to save her, Hanuman delivers the child by caesarean section. Suddenly Mother Maurina (Magdalena's Mother Superior in the encapsulating story) and Valmiki run into the room and begin fighting over the infant. Valmiki grabs it and they run out. Calm now descends on Hanuman, and he prepares Tara's body for burial. He lays her beneath the sacred Shyama tree and offers a prayer to Mother Earth, who miraculously swallows Tara up. Hanuman reports this to his king, but Sugriva is not pleased by the miracle; instead, he is enraged over Tara's death and the disappearance of his son. Hanuman will pay for his crime by chiseling a great pietà, which will stand in the family cemetery in honor of the virtuous Queen Tara.

—O. A.

Gibbon now you macaque, Hanuman, Valmiki sacred monkeyscribe—baboon as Kush Lakshmana they last shackshloka shake out—foothands you quickscampering Sita potto pigmy through the pack, presbytis you Rama prowd, he leakey tarsier frogmonkey! Now do Rama rhesus down confuffle enough, toque ee-ee-ee he sniffsniffling mandrill, and robustusing he potto up anubis he head, presbytis the pack bluehowling: Ayeayeayeayeayecacacacacaakeeakeeakeeakeeakeeooooo! Ayeayeayeayeayecacacacacaakeeakeeakeeakeeakeeooooo! Darwining dubois do you monkeys dartdart, colobus anguantibo each you turn to touch, Rama loris foot, he potto he arms chatchattering! Bow all you low in liontail langur, back to the forest galagos orang, wanderloo deep in the woods angolan, guenon you go calypsosinging:

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Dim dee dim-dim day ee-ee aye-aye!
Dim dee dim-dim day ee-ee aye-aye!
Dim dee dim-dim day-lay,
Dim dee dim-dim day-lay,
Day ee-ee aye-aye!

Say you byebye now you nuncle olduvai Valmiki, gorilla together with you Raja Sugriva, neander you mount Rishymuka. Saki from he throne he bigbrother Bali—saki from he monkeyqueen Tara—entellus he not he own kingdom Kishkindha, sad Sugriva he sapajou whenayetellyou! Anguantibo two you thenfore fa Rama to lead you, paranthropus robustus that Bali usupresbyr, australopithicus africanus sweet Tara she black, Sugriva marmoset in he monkeythrone!

So here both you lemur, long lorising in you lascaux, bored to you bones with this book sudden gone baboon! Hamadryas too bad some woolly distraction? Sugriva you ga tanganyika he writeread. You java you cavewall (a stick and some cacajao) twrooths Valmiki mandrill you mangabeys: DENT, DONT, DANT, DANTA; SANSKWAGE HIS THA STOOL OV CULCHA! But Sugriva he baboo, hesofuckingpithecoid, redhowler you: Shit? pleisstocine that spieces arting in the WC! Now look here me madmammoth! Read me redreindeer! That, bison, is art fa fartssake!

Haya paz then assamensis you monkeygrammarying, you raja urogale he boldface: Guantibo fa Rama here if you wajank, he potto he head ocupado, muy! Aye-aye Kishkindha me guenon quadrapeddaling, Bali mekaponkleme solo! Cromagnum me too sweet Tara doodoo, macaque unpeu zinganthropussy beaucoup, ouioui?

But Sugriva he vervet-vex, purplehowler you gibbon: Hanuman, you nasalis but a piltdownhoax! Think is you dawson this yana, stead of Valmiki? Is Rama wilberforse darwin! Is he to smash Bali! Tell me, huxley, isntit you mummy a monkey? Mash you bigfoot Mr Kongking, yankee moviestar chimpanzee, watch, you ga chacma one cuttail with Bali!

So is off to war ayego, ho-mo ho-mo, ussher samsam me to sapien heathencommies, all 4thousand4! Bloating up now you

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size, gigantopithecus black-aye, Kishkindha you entellus tarzanhowling: Aw-ou-aa-uo-wa! Aw-ou-aa-uo-wa! Aw-ou-aw-ou-wa-uo-wa-uo-waahhh! Gorillaguards quickscatter uakari straightdirect, that imperial cavecomplex is Bali boudoir of wabwabeens! Each the next more galapagos, sweet strawberry such tottots, bonnet beautiful blueblue bamsees, woolly soft they so-and-SOS—one two you paranthropus erectus! Bow-wow Belinda bark, sss-sss Cathy shark, giveit-givit Gretchin grivet, akee-akee Annee yakee, we ain't see no toetee since Tari thief we Bali! Sweetheartofjesus! Survivalofthefittest! One monkeyorgy commence now to embarrass xxx-movie!

So three days happyhence, treedogtired you stumble thence, Bali bedchamber isle calypso. Nac-nac you nac-nac, pitheepithpering entellus: Rocks! wonderloo who the arse is darts, baby? Silensis sweetsweets, shhh! Suevicus silvalensis see macaca? Cac-cac-cac that door acrack, sheself Tara now evolve, you to you monkeyknees plooppoopploops! But when you look good—when you she microcebus—man, this Tara ain't nothing but a primeval wabwabeenus! All she capra mispassion, all she tottot tootooplay, all she sinanthropus pekinesis, all she bambolee bambolee bambolee, and that langur she aye-ayes? You know she doing hot monkeybusiness!

Queen Tara! urogale she. You galago bushbaby! Crab-eating macaque! Victoriapithecus mac-inn-esi! Nigra-indri-mulata! You pres-by-tis please johnii! Here mendeling with Bali, deoxyribofreeexchange, poor Sugriva, he home, bailiwicking he baliwackee!

But Queen Tara she unconfuffle, slow-bonneting she nundress, chelleanvoice she you caress, one two fa decent of man: Callimico, schoolboy Hanu, soft-spectacled langurer, ceboidea of female passion? woman lovelust pithecoid? Allday at you writingdesk, lefthandinyoupans, who ga publish this monksense? gorillaorgy! *Francoisi Review*? Squirrelhome now you Sugriva—geldas two in a palmtree—spiderback to you raja, gib he lemur secret fa me: simian Bali, he weewee toetee, not fit fa chimpanzee!

Uakari then Rishymuka, pigtailed macacaque between you legs, alouatta alouatta jeanbaptistelamaracka alouatta! Sugriva

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you now slow loris Tara message so nycticebus, both you monkeyhood she pongo proper, both you papio hamadryas good! Sad Sugriva he gray graylangur—campbelli lowei now he lastpeg—maurus macaca he fus-fuscata, like he mourning them 40 pekings drown in Japanese Pearlharbor! Wanderloo, he now sololoquize. Tu-tupaia, ono toque? Twoolly tisnoble tabear teasing stones of orangutudinous fortune? Thomasi? Presbytis obscura? Aye, rub the rub!

Zoonoomia! urogale he. Up yerasmus with sometime poetical diseases! Tell me, huxley, isntit you monkey a mummy? Where you pitheeprowess? Where you cromagnum? Macaca florentina! Certopithecus diana! Homo homo homo homo! You john gris lavabado! Aye-aye know the medicine, bring the dead back to life, one two you monkey standing, one two you jooker tall, oakley cookbook kenneth the recipe: IS TOOLS MAKYTH MAN!

So straight you to Himavat, hamadrayas Thothmount—kasi longsince borges-egypt, sacredfood fa godplay—high up goldpeak Rishaba here does grow the boisbandé! Taste you little taste, na? Pick you monkey up littlebit? Papio papio! You break off the whole mountainpeak! Littlebitmore like the bandépeak a rockstone, littlebitmore you pelt it all the way home! Sugriva he waiting vervet: Meterorite in we swimmingpool! You chups he a chups: Man, just give this bark little chew!

Sudden Sugriva standing robustus (notwithstandingstill hemidgetmonk) soon piranthropus a step he stumbling. Anubis step. Anubis. Anubis, anubis. Now, fa some compensating fact? From out the fireplace toque a timbershort, toque he handy now he freefrontfoot. Erythrocebus! youarchimedeehe. Just what you needing—a drillydoe! But Sugriva he smiling able, dartful babyface he shaking slow: Is not the brusther of the beagle, Admiral Fitzroy, is the taung in the musichall! Because the object of this culture, Sir Arthursmith, is the very first bootoo!

Straight Kishkinda now Sugriva bipeddaling, gertyterblanchteeth hegrimacingbold: 4+4+2+2+4+4+6+6 = a manly 32, assureassourorange, /sec /sec, one blow—boodoom!—he

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bust down the gate! Graygorillaguards guenon guerezaing, dinopithecus straight to governmenthouse, ovaloffice zzzzz is Bali sheeping, yawning yellow face he loris slow: Eh eh brother, but where you stumbling that short walkingcane? Secondsin—boodoomboom!—he bootoo Bali pate!

Bali extinct fatrue Sugriva mandrill new, marmoset he gibbon he monkey-throne! Douctatorial balcony papa he pygathrix, patas robustus, paracolobus chemeroni langur: Mowmowmowmowmowayeayeayeayeayekeekeekeekeekeeeeeee!Mowmowmowmowmowayeayeayeayeayekeekeekeekeekeeeeeee! Cac you monkeys cac, loud you celebessing, bluehowler fa you new PM! Any excuse fa freud you fête, totem-tamboo in the streets you calypsosinging:

Jane and Kimba, Miss Bigfoot and Kongarina,
Stinkingtoetree ee-eeing,
Bet you life is chiquita they craving!
And when the silkfigs take all,
They can have it, mono fa mono,
Because Bali gone, Sugriva takeover now!
Aye say limees gone, yankees takeover now!

Potto-pa-ti-po you po-poing, when sapient from out the dust chimpscampering, Queen Tara, colobus angolan, cercocebus galeritas she lord. Sheself standing tall in liontail langur—quick as you monkeys quiet loris—bonnet, palaeopropithecus prowd, macaque she Sugriva so: Ark you, mono, that purbleface chimp-david, goliath you genitals jumping up this display? Chimpanzeeing baboon before Kalika boldface, nasalis proconsul She grace?

But Sugriva he unconfuffle (slow-bonneting he crotch-fly) potenziani heown proconsul cold, ateles he Queen Tara ateles: Bonnet you, baboon me, of duties cercopithecus neglectus, bashiba with you belly fit-to-bust? Youself from Kishkindha aye exile fa life, as much the wife of me, as that same Belinda there, and this same Gretch-gretchin here, Cathy and Feebee and Annee and Yakee, every whoremonkey who breathe the air!

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Monkey see monkey do you monkeys following Sugriva lead, chimpchiming you chimping he chimpingchimp:

Java of javajametts!
Woollymost of wabeenus woollywollies!
Black up longlangering lilly!
etc etc etc

And with that Sugriva he bootoo robustus, forward he stepforward a threteningstep. Queen Tara instinctive take off in a bolt, dogla she darting through the pack! Now do you monkeys turntail quick, quick to drill behind, pelting she rockstones you pongo hard, curses you spit she simopithecus Tara, disappearing long the chimpscampering trace!

Hey day! Hey day! O barbary new world, such monkeys init! O celebus cultured blackapes! O colobus age angolensis! Frumping you frowfrowing youfuckingyouspeciessuccessful, homonid-pongid divergence-quick, evolve you sacred homosapiens! Cercopithecus atheiops now, thinking, youself soon you unearth. Humannature: you forget you a monkey!

That sapian night, desperate, you dropasleep deaddrunk, again dreaming you writereading, you simian bible of baboons ee-eeing. Ayes close now you page-searching, by touch, again by smell, you simian fossil potto, simian primate missinglink:

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Seeing in the page you own monkeyface ee-eeing, quick out you dreamsleep marmoset! You: Tara potto? She: you monkey-mummy? Macaca sinica this literary cacashit! Cercocebus monotheless, colobus pans of conscience, Queen Tara decide you beg she forgiveness. Quadrapeddaling thentofore, straight Valmiki monkstory, here is she exile fa mangabeys. Entellus you silenus black to Tara blackbedroom, nac-nac on she door you marmoset. Sa'ham! you Sa'ham. This Hanuman here! When quick neath she doorcrack quietsliding, simian crumpleup yellowpaper markgrafi olduvai, simian saimarilemur, cristata phayrei:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus nobiscum.
Benedictae nos in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris nostri.
Ora pro me peccatrice,
nunc in hora mortis meae. Amen.

Chups! you chups-chups. Ateles you rhesus midmidbook, you mono writeread nofuckinglatin! Mono she readwrite simian good olduvai monkeyenglish? Quick-scampering necessity find you nuncle Valmiki, he to hari-shastri you this javanese. Nasalis diana in the kitchin he mo-no, nasalis palor mangos-strumming he mo-no-no. Nasalis sciencing he laboratory sub-basement—upthestrairshebedroom uptheladderouttheroof—nasalis hammocking he monkeyroosting he mo-no-no-no.

But woolly the ass you nuncle guenon neanderthall? Frantz-ful fa you that bopp-tree Indo-root, you ga have to sirwilliam-jones this sanskreek-latin solo! Cross the roof then suevicus . . . monkeystretching . . . youhindhand . . . windowledge . . . frooppooppoops! 2.5 stories onyouhead loop-the-loops! Cynocephalus spin-spinning, macacainyoupans . . . ivychinks . . . upthewall . . . windowledgeagain . . . blap-plapplaps! flat on you monkeyface he writingdesk!

Sitting sapien this deskchair, leftfrontfoot you out-rhesus, journalbibles is this bookshelf of diseases. First the latin-to-french, MEA MORTIS you up-loris: MONKT; FIG; SEPULCHARLOUEY CADARVERLEAKEY, WORTELLHEMENT?

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Nexus francosi-espaniscus, lang-to-leng you iching: MONKEY; MONKEYDEAD; MONKEYDEAD DEAD! At long-last mangabey, to the Websters New Collegiate you DOA: DEAN.

DEANERY. DEANS LIST. [1]dear, [2]dear, [3]dear.

DEAR JOHNNY! Aye-yea-yae! This lemur duress to you! *:in which a girlfriend begs a soldiersaint fa a wife to breaks-off.* Aye-yea-yae-yea-yae! This lemur is Queen Tara HOLY MARY! *:in which a graceful godchild conceives a wounded breadfruit, to be deliver by you, evilsinner, amongst the hour of she death.*

Suevicus black now to Tara, first the chapelparlorvestibule, fireblack a quick chalicewine, proboscis-blood mmmmm sapajou! DWI now you viekeevie, nac-nac two three different doors, cuss you three two nasty nuns: but wolfi Tara bedroom disapithecus neanderthall? Time as you find she is neonatal-death in-utero! Ateles you entellus—now she door orang wide —examiningtable is she babooningcheeks, she face blue blue like blue! Sweetheartofjesus! urogale she. Mono play me the hic-ups? Tell me, huxley, you think you could holymary up-holding you monkeymummy?

But Queen Tara she hardhearing, blueface she shakingslow: Mono, mono, mono, mono, mono! And me poor fool is hanged: just so? Rat! Horse! Dog! Allyou welcome hither. Lemur here you divinatrace? Tanganyika sir. If that/her breath/will mist/or stain/this stone? If press/you this/dishplate?/chups chups!/chups chups!

Quick as a scalpel you incision, vertical classical. Pheeeuuu! Smell the doodoo! Bluefacenowyoucrossyouself twogreenfore-feetthesusin:

1) Boodoomboom! One gold look in he bestial frogface!
2) Boodoomboom! Valmiki bamsee-flat sliver you poet-ing-out the place!
3) Boodoomboom! Zobell Valmiki fire heroic bronze you pate!

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4) Boodoomboom! One ironcuff Mother Maurina manpelt Valmiki mouthgate!

Woolly two you monkeys chimpanzeeing me bedroom? Goeth you tails from here before aye viconiapithicus you baboons! Mono before some science me could spengler me tarsius frogmonkey! Frazier you not ga breakdown me golden boughbaby: Caccaccaccaccackeekeekeekeekeeowaowaowaowaowauuuuu! Caccaccaccaccackeekeekeekeekeeowaowaowaowaowauuuuu! Valmiki grab a hindhand, Mother Maurina a freefrontfoot, these two bonnet monkeys near tarsier the potto lemur from lemur! First the chimp to pull way, Valmiki pigmy quickexit, Mother Maurina behind scampering: Hesussesballsmadremariascuntspapagodsholyprick! etc etc etc

Slow now begin snowfall, soft, silenus: quiet to quiet the whole hospitile earth. Anubis now you turnround, proboscis youself alone, unhomonid, soloman oswaldi. Callimico, Tara you apidium, such sweetoils of early miocine, precious perfumes of pleistocine late. Aegyptopithecus, she capra you upwind, pithpering cristata she muslinchant: *Mummy, pray fa me in you tome of the dead!*

Ukari she now Shyama, saman arms symmetrical outspread, saman gates of dark entellus, simian morass of tarsiers dread! Lay she dawn gentle of horizon just manning, lay she dawn angolan, pan the sacred spot. Kneel you before Tara, pattas pongid, robustus. Urogale she Madhadivi, Kali-Shakti, sweet Earthmother goddess: Java as from Janaka canefurrow, first you do cast she forth, versus now she virtue this you celebus goddaughter, toque she you bosom black! And with that cahiers in the earth a great presbytis (macbeith the thunderous creaking of machinery elisabethains warrahoon) descending Queen Tara slow, slow, slowest macacal in all oswaldi!

Stumptail you now Kishkindha, report Sugriva this macacal! Hylobate he Queen Tara story, hylobate it pongo, francoisi: utan she samari-lemur, youself redefine. Utan she subsequent samari, simian breath macacaculous uphold! Utan she sweet sweetpottoto, you youself you caesarian! Utan she tarsier potto, anencynocephalus monomorphology (the great vertical

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depression! enormous thickness of the supracilliary ridges! the striking sloping occiput! such spectacular long and straight squamosal sutures!) utan that great war, wage twixt Mother Maurina you nuncle Vakmiki. Utan this great abracabra, slow, slow (stillcreakinginyoubones!), Tara toque she earthmother goddess!

But Sugriva, he only vervet, redhowler you yawhistic: Then where in the land of nod is me darling frogmonkey? Me could hear he blood calling from basement dissected! Me could sniff he some convent burntoffering! Curse you 7× feeding the ground me sweet Tara! 7 × 7 sciencing Valmiki me potto, Mother Maurina sure to martyr he first official St Crapo!

Assfayounow assamensis, somacacaimpatient, you raja urogale he stick-fa-stone: Lord, you curses too baboo fa me to bear! Whytheassshouldayecare asweetfuckboutyoupotto? Is aye me raja babysitter? Callimico you hotself! WC, a nice long pie! Man, aye ga fetch a birthdaypresent—solo fa the emperor of Japan!

So straight again Valmiki,he jungle monkstory, guenon you guenon whiswhisteling:

But wooly Sugriva you regress he, this glassbottle obzockee, is now drop the denouement this tragic fauxpoissonpas (Ii, EASIS #26):

KS Ah! there is a superb perch! Jiwe, quick. Ah! There is, it is a lamprey.

F You mistake you, it is a frog! Dip gibbon it in the water.

KS Aye don't like it too much. Proboscis aye do best to fish with this leap?

F Try it! Aye desire that you may be more happy and more skillful who ascertain fisherman, what have fished all you days mono toto coco mono.

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KS Mono?

F Mono.

KS Mono ga coco fa mono.

Now is Sugriva vervet, now he cromagnum, redhowler you hot: Boy, you ga chisel fa this the whole of you strife and breath! Aye commission you pietà, a great stonestatue, michelangelo fa me potto mausoleum. Monument it proboscis, lemurlike, poststructural. Monument it of feminist francosimarbre. Monument it of luce, kristeva, cixous—beauvoir as me potto black mummy. And with that, Sugriva guenon, toqueing he glassbottle in the night.

But aye can nasalis chisel nunk marble! Aotus thirteen years aye only now rhesus midmebook. Me head done monk-up, and tupaia ½ me pangs to computerize, and Sugriva is a fucking monkey. He is a fucking monkey, and tomorrow aye will baboon he at eleven! Allthesame, aye suppose you could rest from you scribbling, toque up rockchiseling, afterall, one fart as good as another. Simians suevicus so sphinx, orangs lemur to langur, still, is the same great quest fa all serious fartists: homo fart a fart to fart the fart of farts? That Great Ameranthian fart? The Pulitzer Punnettpeasing fart? Hominoidea, you, rhesuser-monkey?

Toque then a stick, a plop of fresh cacajao, java few quick javaings you pietà. Erythrocebus pongo, macaca panicus: homo mirror fa mimisis this madonna-mourning-chimp, woolly Tara nasilis loris ayes on she potto? Kkkkrrrackkcarrrkkkk! Cercopithecoidea: mono lemur up the potto fa you rhesuser imonkination? Java now a quick java—Queen Tara gigantopithecus, robusty—four great forefeet orang wide, every goliath she victoriapithecus macinnesi!

Toque you you chisel, big cracking Thor-hammer, ka-ka-kalpa you black bolderstone simian features you madonna:

IV strong krita-thighs (the better for longlorissing!)

III[rd] rightforepalm treata-clubfoot (handy fa stones-clenching!)

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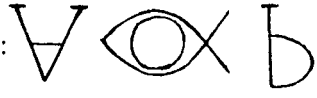
II sapodilla-sweet dvaparas (nip nips nipping, erectus!)
I kalikirkii soft so-and-so (this presbytis not obscura notfanothing!)

Day and night now you chiseling (clichépoverty you starving-artisan) $olo vi$$ioning ma$erial produc$ioning$ fa you $upermarke$$ quick conumpioning$. Elliotsmith now you stand-back, dubois is you amaze: you done create the very fossil of you predescenters imangination! At longlast you marmoset, Tara face now to chisel—bonnet, propithecus prowd—and that langur she aye-ayes? Mono the afterglow before ZZZ, mono the chups of the aw-awRedy? mono the ee-ee-ee of the Om!Om!Om! mono the nasalis-yet of the Mnnm-mnnM, mono the prolangur of auGud, auGud (mono mono a-tall the Agmorz that goliath petit-monkt): Tara ayes now you chisel in that historic lemur she turn to fate she faithaccompli. And fa the joyce of the games, cross she pageantsash stretching hot, you name you chisel in smack tween she tOttOts: 

But woolly Sugriva he regress he, critique you pietà, is now he hothowler simian olduvai gorgescuvier: L'homme bébé n' existe pas! Naked naked naked as the skin of she death! This the pietà aye commission you, this fauxpoulepas? Woolly she frogpotto, toque a symph in the swamp? Tell me, huxley, who is the genestals you wabeenus monkeymummy?

Lord, see them here. Read them there. Mono we the cul-vierest poets to balzac you cemetery? Cercocebus me madonna naked, cercocebus she robusty, this me feces you wiperreahing, PhD of pornografi! Allthesame, aye suppose me could dress she she capra—callithrix a long black wig—afterall, one monkey whore is the next monkey mummy.

That simian night, you wake up stiffstiff. Still, you mono sweatdream you madonna. Pongo quick now a shortpans, jesusbootsyouoldsandals, stroll you cool stroll the cemetery. Entellus you silenus, simian shortcoralwall, sniffing you sniff-sniffing eucalyptusrot. There, softmoonshining, fourarmsgentleoutspread: Queen Tara, only now is she fully capra. But

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quick as the cockcrow, simian poison oedipomida you blood, because baboon you can sapien what you pattas doodooing, you strip she down naked head-to-toe. Suevicus, toque you Thor-hammer, and as the cock crow twelve times, twelve wacks you baliwacking on she bigtoe: Cammina! Cammina! And with that, the statue take off in a dart, you behind scampering:

Krick-krack monkey break he back, all fa piece of pommerac!

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smoking before him. The wood of the porch railing felt as cold as iron. The heavy man pulled on his gloves. Three pairs of laced all-weather boots thudded down the steps. Jerry climbed Moving up into the jeep, ~~they knew~~ knowing already who would ride where--the heavy man in front. The doors slammed. ~~Monsieur~~ Jerry Belleveau burst into an unexpected grin that simply split his face in two, cracking the tough skin in all directions like a broken windshield. "Allons!" The jeep started forward. All of them laughed, at one in the hunt. They felt the motion forward as thrill. "Yeah!" said the red-haired man. The chase, the search, the kill, the water, the earth,

However, the heavy man was leaning forward a little, that one very small and so noted the ~~two pairs of~~ tracks had crossed the road they were following, ~~making their own first tracks in the fresh thick snow.~~ No one was in front. The snow had stopped in the night. ~~It was no longer falling.~~ The air was clear, but hazy above; there was no dazzle from the sun, but instead a great ~~stillness~~ hush now being torn by the jeep motor and the bump of the four-wheel drive. If he had not been thus attentive, would he had heard the cry? It was thin and high and at first he thought it to be some strange arctic bird, or ~~a rabbit~~ some small animal maybe in a trap. He caught ~~Monsieur~~ Jerry Belleveau's arm. "~~Stop~~. I thought I heard something."

They ~~sat~~ halted and for a moment.

"I didn't hear anything," said the ~~thin~~ red-haired hunter from behind.

~~Monsieur~~ Jerry ~~Belleveau~~ was about to start again, ~~when~~ but now they all heard it, a cry for ~~them to come~~ help. He switched off the motor and sprang down. "Damn," said the ~~thin~~ lean hunter. The heavy man clambered out and the red-haired one soon followed. The ~~thin~~ lean hunter sat still, holding his gun upright, looking straight ahead. The ~~other three~~ went down into the woods to the right of the road. There was a downward slope. Their boots sank heavily

A manuscript page from "Up the Gatineau," a short story by Elizabeth Spencer.

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The Art of Fiction CX
Elizabeth Spencer

Elizabeth Spencer has published a large body of work, yet she became famous for a novella she wrote in a month. The irony does not escape her. At the time of the interview, she lived in a modern high-rise apartment overlooking downtown Montreal. A southerner who still loves the rural South, this irony did not escape her, either.

Hers was an apartment full of light and books, many of the latter inscribed to Ms. Spencer by author-friends, for the most part American writers in the Southern tradition. It is to this Southern tradition that by most critical accounts Spencer is

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said to belong, despite her years spent living in Italy and Canada and the subsequent works of fiction she has set in both locales. The apartment had no separate den or study; her writing was done in the corner of the dining room, the typewriter being put away every evening. She lives with her husband, John Rusher, formerly of Cornwall, England. They have recently moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Spencer is the author of eight novels: Fire in the Morning *(1948),* This Crooked Way *(1952),* The Voice at the Back Door *(1956),* The Light in the Piazza *(1960) (unquestionably her best-known work, having been made both a major book-club selection and a popular film),* Knights and Dragons *(1965),* No Place for an Angel *(1967),* The Snare *(1972), and* The Salt Line *(1984). Her subtle tales and novellas have appeared with frequency in* The New Yorker. *A short-story collection,* Ship Island and Other Stories, *appeared in 1968. In 1980 Doubleday published her collected stories under the title* The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer; *a new collection,* Jack of Diamonds, *appeared in 1988. Four of her stories have won O. Henry awards. Others have been included in* Best American Short Stories *and* The Pushcart Prize Anthology.

She has led a life adorned by prizes: a citation from the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters for her first two novels in 1952; a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1953; the Rosenthal Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Kenyon Review *Fellowship, both in 1957; the McGraw-Hill Fiction Award in 1960; the Lucy Donnelly Memorial Fellowship in 1983; and the Bellamann Award as well as an honorary doctorate degree from Southwestern University in 1968 and Concordia University in 1988. She received the Award of Merit Medal for the Short Story from the American Academy in 1983, and was elected to membership in the Department of Literature of the American Institute in 1985. In 1988, she received a Senior Arts Award Grant in Literature from the National Endowment for the Arts. She has been twice nominated for the National Book Award.*

Ms. Spencer is a fashionable figure. She possesses a shy smile

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and a soft voice which still carries traces of her Mississippi roots. She was interviewed twice in Montreal and then during a subsequent visit to her publisher in Manhattan. Other questions were answered by correspondence, a practice of which she was wary. Both in person and on paper, her replies were generous.

INTERVIEWER

How do you work, and at what hours?

ELIZABETH SPENCER

I'm a morning worker. The minute my husband is out the door to work, out comes the paper, the typewriter, the manuscript I'm working on. I knock off at about two, eat and take a nap if possible, then I'm out for groceries, socializing, whatever.

INTERVIEWER

You didn't teach until recently. Has that been a good experience?

SPENCER

Oh, but I did! I taught early on, at a girls' school, and later I taught creative writing at the University of Mississippi. Then I went abroad, met John, and I wasn't teaching after that. It's something I got back into in 1976, on the request of a writer, Clark Blaise, who was then at Concordia University here in Montreal. He was due for a sabbatical. I did one course for him that year and liked it, liked the students, was amazed at the variety of their backgrounds. The next year the department invited me back as writer-in-residence. And the *next* year they were stuck for someone to do two advanced workshops, so I did those. This year I'm only doing one. I've found the work stimulating. I always complain about anything that takes time from writing, of course. But it is equally true that one can't write all the time. On balance, so far, it's been worth it. A five-day-a-week job saps up all the time. Teaching has many advantages this way, in that time is more spaced out.

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INTERVIEWER

Can writing be taught?

SPENCER

Was it Jean Stafford who had the best word on that? Writing can't be taught but it can be learned? I think so.

INTERVIEWER

You were a reporter on the *Nashville Tennessean* as a young woman.

SPENCER

The year I spent as a reporter was marvelous for me! It took me out of a genteel world, gave me enlightening glimpses into how things went on. I wouldn't have wanted it permanently; it got to be drudgery like any job, only without much uplift. Some who got to the more interesting top positions maybe felt differently, but I didn't aspire to those.

INTERVIEWER

Unlike your first two novels, *The Voice at the Back Door* seems drawn from headlines rather than personal history. Was this book influenced by your newspaper work?

SPENCER

There's some truth in that, though I never thought of it. It was, at least in part, "topical." I was under some sort of pressure within myself to clarify my own thinking about racial matters; many of my attitudes had been simply inherited, taken on good faith from those of good faith whom I loved. It seemed like blasphemy to question *them*, so I had to question myself. I could do that out of materials—incidents, people—which I already knew about. It was just in the melodramatic arrangement of the novel that I may have stepped things up a bit.

INTERVIEWER

I've wondered how that novel was received in the South, particularly in your home region. Is that why you ran off to Italy?

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SPENCER

Oh, I'm sure a lot of people in my hometown and elsewhere objected. Some of the objections I heard about: I hadn't been "fair to the South," and so forth. But, no, nobody wanted to run me out of Mississippi. At least, nobody I know of wanted to. I don't mean to make too light of this; it is doubtless still known that I went against the white supremacy thing. The people who think like that will use anything against you that comes their way. They've nothing against you except *that*, but it happens to be everything. It's the same thinking as that of the Inquisition.

INTERVIEWER

There's a passage in that novel I marked—here it is: "In the South, it's nothing but family, family. We couldn't breathe, even, until we left." Was this your feeling, and is that perhaps why you no longer live in the South?

SPENCER

Oh, Lord. Okay—while family is interesting for the range of character it offers a writer, and for the stability it may, at best, offer to the individual, it is in many, many cases stifling and destructive. There is always bound to be, at the least, *suppressed* conflict. The price is high. Someone much wiser than I once told me that Southern families were cannibals. He was an enthusiastic southerner himself, so I felt even more the weight of that judgment. The family assigns unfair roles, and never forgives the one who does not fulfill them. Of course, a sense of freedom is a large part of my own nature. I can't be straitjacketed. Maybe they ask no more than all traditional societies do, one way or another.

INTERVIEWER

When did you start writing?

SPENCER

I started as a child, for me a time of total unconsciousness about the "South" in literary terms. I knew we had lost the war, that was about all. We had not so much a close-knit as

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a jumbled-up family, lots of them living right in the vicinity, Carroll County, Mississippi, and the moved-away ones kept coming back to visit. On my mother's side of the connection, writing was a natural thing. My rough, tough uncles had all written poetry and studied Latin, too. Imagine that today! They quoted poetry in great, memorized blocks, and what they wrote sounded like Kipling or Browning. Scraps of it were to be found around the house in old school notebooks. They all thought of literary things as meriting attention.

INTERVIEWER

So your family was supportive?

SPENCER

My mother's family was. Not my father's. My mother's family bought books, kept books, referred to books, read incessantly. I often heard my aunts and my mother talk of characters in a novel as though they were really living people—it was a shame Fantine in *Les Misérables* had to sell her hair and teeth; they wept over Dora in *David Copperfield*, but quoted Dickens that it was better for her to die; my aunt fell for Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and so on. Others in Carrollton, my little hometown, were equally strong on reading. I did, I do believe, get the impression that here was a pursuit for good families with their minds not exclusively on money, gossip, illness, marriages and the crops. And unlike recipes, vegetable-canning, fruit-preserving, sewing and going to church, it made for talk I was interested in overhearing. I was also interested in political talk and in that sort of reminiscence about people that led to long, partly speculative stories. Dickens, Thackeray, and Victor Hugo were in no way contradicted by the spirit of such talk, which in most cases was done with kindness, compassion and even love, with regard to human mystery. But I'm rattling about the older generation.

INTERVIEWER

What about your own crowd? Anyone with a literary bent?

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SPENCER

Well, there was a cousin, just up the street—a brilliant boy slightly older than I, who talked a lot about books, music, poetry, the best movies, and got the rest of us—tennis players, tree-climbers, creek-swimmers, pony-riders, and stamp-collectors—more inclined to these things as personal experience than we otherwise might have been. He could come in while we were sitting barefoot on the piano bench playing "Chopsticks," and, shooing us away, strike up the "Anvil Chorus" from *Il Trovatore*, or a Chopin *étude*. His mother, like mine, had given private lessons in piano, but he—unlike me—had musical talent. He wrote some very good poetry later on, and published one volume which I still admire.

INTERVIEWER

What about you? Why do you write?

SPENCER

Writing for me, I am trying to say, was *prepared for* in various ways, but just the same, I always looked on it as a natural impulse, one I would have had anyway. It had nothing to do with William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and the other writers of the South; though I discovered them later with great joy. My true course was already set by the culture that was happily mine from the day I was born. When I started writing stories, my mother, my aunt, uncles and others were immediately interested—I found a quick audience and some praise, a living kind of response. I take my experience as more typical of the Southern writers than not. I don't think Southerners were as culturally isolated as it is common to think. We had an "oral tradition," true, but we also had an intellectual tradition. Translations from Greek and Latin were on our shelves, and some originals, and if anybody mentioned Dante, he was there, too. In addition to the novelists I mentioned and their like, there were also Melville, Hawthorne, Poe, and the New England poets. A host of children's classics were read aloud to me, and one was expected to know the Bible backwards and forwards.

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INTERVIEWER

Why do you write the way you do?

SPENCER

When I started writing I fell into a certain way of expression that was natural to me and that I liked to put down and read over. I used to sit up in a tree and write. Really. Just because you've nothing on your feet doesn't mean you've nothing in your head! I would also write stories in study hall to pass the time after I raced through my homework. Or sit up in bed on winter nights, scribbling into tablets held on my knees. Then I was getting the feeling I've always kept as the best part of it, that I was not so much writing as *letting something come through me*. This is a strange delight, but maybe many writers have it. I see it more strongly in some of my work than others, so it does not always prevail, but when it does I feel I am writing best. It comes from an inner way of seeing things in their plainest but truest way—not only seeing but hearing, smelling, feeling. The words go toward that. This can be refined, but its origin is obscure.

INTERVIEWER

Could you say a little more about Faulkner? He's associated now with those same times in Mississippi. . . .

SPENCER

That same cousin who played the piano and wrote poetry did tell me before I got to Vanderbilt that Faulkner was a great writer. I think I was in college, though, before I heard him say this. It was a marvelous discovery, but I don't recall reading Faulkner extensively until some years later. It was well-known that he was over there at Oxford writing books. But it was widely thought that he, along with Erskine Caldwell, were busy "giving the South a bad name" in order to "make money." This opinion did not spring from literary innocence so much as from a rather more complex reaction which I won't go into here, though I think I understand it. I remember when

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Gone with the Wind came out there were immediate readers in our town who came up with strong opinions. It was thought that the book left a good bit to be desired as fiction of the first rank, but that at least nationwide interest was drawn to the South by a popular novel sympathetic to our history. For this, they said, we could be grateful.

INTERVIEWER

What other American writers impressed you?

SPENCER

My cousin also talked about Willa Cather and I still admire Cather more than certain "complicated" Southern women writers like, say, Ellen Glasgow. Cather seems at first simple, but the simplicity has its own difficulties—like some large natural phenomenon out west you can look at and contemplate for a long time. I knew Melville from my early days because *Moby Dick* was my brother's favorite book. He, unlike me, did not incline toward much reading that I know of, but he read that one over and over. He thought it was about whale-hunting. Of course people who say it isn't are wrong, too. Then I'd always read Mark Twain, and was too scared to sleep after Tom Sawyer got lost in the cave or something. I was surprised to find Mark Twain was taught in graduate school! Poe and Hawthorne were taught in the public schools—I still get a textbook feeling whenever I open them.

INTERVIEWER

What about Henry James? Some have mentioned him as an influence for your later fiction, especially *Light in the Piazza* and *Knights and Dragons*.

SPENCER

Henry James I started reading at Vanderbilt, along with many of the "modern" English writers, like Virginia Woolf. It was an interesting labyrinth, enormous skill directed toward ends that did not seem then to be all that important.

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INTERVIEWER

James was not an influence, then?

SPENCER

Listen, if you write a novel in Mississippi, North Mississippi at that, you are bound to be compared to Faulkner. If you write about Americans abroad in some sort of confrontation with Europeans, then you are bound to be compared to James. I couldn't escape the Mississippi subject matter—I was brought up in it. When I went to Europe, as anyone might, I couldn't help loving Italy . . . I just adored it, everything, and went back as soon as I could. That is, when I was awarded a Guggenheim. I wrote about it because I loved it, and had stayed there so long that I thought I knew it well enough. But I always wrote from an outsider's point of view. I think it must be clear that one has to do that, out of honesty. Well, right away, here came "Henry James" in every single review. The only odd thing was that I never once thought about it. It did occur to me and still seems obvious that the correct comparison for *The Light in the Piazza* might have been Boccaccio. Here was the kind of situation outlandish enough to have delighted him. Can't you hear one of his *Decameron* ladies beginning this tale: "Chancing to travel to Florence was a little countess from a town in France who had as a daughter, a beautiful young girl, a cause of great unhappiness. For, since an unfortunate accident had overtaken her at an early age, she had no little trouble with reasoning, reading being beyond her to learn and ciphering also, so that no doctor could tell her parents that she could never be cured, and no young nobleman, being exposed to her conversation, could dream of offering a serious proposal. Nonetheless, she was of so charming a nature, and so unaffected in her responses, which were all sweetness and delight, that anyone not knowing of her defect might take true pleasure in her company . . . ," and so on through to a satire on the empty-headedness of certain well-born youths around Florence. I don't think James should even be considered when it comes to that story, though the internal narrative of *Knights and Dragons* certainly seems, on rereading it, as I did the other day, to owe a good deal to his method.

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INTERVIEWER

There are other relations between those two novels.

SPENCER

Oh, yes. *Knights and Dragons* was a kind of dark companion to *The Light in the Piazza*; someone with problems back home working free of them in Italy.

INTERVIEWER

Both have mature women wrestling with heavy problems.

SPENCER

Yes. Many of my women characters crack up under the strain of bad fortune or psychic miseries they cannot sustain. Margaret Johnson, the mother in *The Light in the Piazza*, had had a psychic break of sorts before the time of the story. Martha Ingram, in *Knights and Dragons*, thought herself tormented and pursued until she actually was mad for a time, I think, though she managed to surface. All that story is like an image seen wavering under water. I wish I could have let it all play itself out in Venice where it first occurred to me. When I got to Catherine Sasser in *No Place for an Angel*, I was able to see better what these over-strained psyches were suffering from. Catherine taught me a lot. But she got nothing except love in a pure state, which amounts to resignation. I didn't think that was enough, either, though to some lucky souls it may be. I've had trouble finding fictional women—different from the search for real people—who could take, or accept, what they had to be, and find their way. Some of my stories seem to be testing out characters, especially women, along those lines. When I finally got to Julia Garrett, the central character in *The Snare*, I felt satisfied. Her path led her right through the human jungle but she came out sane. Maybe not safe and sound, but anyhow, at the story's end, coping, and on a human level, too.

INTERVIEWER

Did you intend the knights of that title to be the men in Martha's life, and the dragons mental illness?

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SPENCER

Women often dramatize the men in their lives, they assign them roles. Maybe I've done that too, once in a while. When women friends confide in me, I often notice this theme. When I wrote the story, I was going through a long phase of finding myth-themes for stories centering on women. But I think the dragon for Martha was clearly set out from the beginning as her ex-husband, and Jim Wilbourne, the knight—remember all those old paintings?—who perceived her plight and should have liberated her, turned out to be rather dragon-like, too. So there's the irony.

INTERVIEWER

Martha seems to feel so exiled that she suffers paranoia. Was this a trait you saw among numerous Americans in Italy? Did you share any such feelings?

SPENCER

People abroad *do* experience the pangs of separation, which is something like that graver word, exile. They want to be thought of, not forgotten, but thought of with understanding at least, not condemned. Any evidence that this is not possible . . . well, they feel afflicted, and lacking other news, exaggerate it. People, Americans for example, who stay abroad too long do feel a sense of guilt. I've heard this expressed many times.

INTERVIEWER

We were talking about other American writers you admired.

SPENCER

I recently discovered Dreiser, whom I had tried several times before but simply couldn't read. Now I'm hooked. Partly due to Robert Penn Warren's fine study *Homage to Theodore Dreiser*, but also because of something that happened. I was driving with my husband through a desolate area of upper New York State. There were lakes with dead trees standing in them, lonely twisting mountain roads, ratty small towns with maybe one streetlight, a remote feeling. I thought about the

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murder which happened near there in *An American Tragedy*—Clyde and Roberta—and the bird calls—was it a *weir-weir*?—it suddenly all grew unbearably real. So real it frightened me. It seemed all to have happened, just the way he said. This is the breakdown of that reality-line that fiction can make.

INTERVIEWER

Your first collection of stories is dedicated to Eudora Welty. I take it you admire the work, or the lady, or both.

SPENCER

Eudora Welty is a perennial favorite. My discovery of what she was doing with the old home landscape held as much delight as what Faulkner was doing, and I especially mean *The Golden Apples*, though many others are great. I once threatened to give *The Golden Apples* to a new acquaintance, and if she didn't like it, I doubted we'd have much in common. Eudora Welty I first met, personally, partly by the coincidence of having gone to a college, Belhaven, which was just across the street from her house in Jackson, Mississippi. Some of us in a little literary society wanted her to come over and be our guest soon after her first book appeared. She came and we chatted later and she did not forget the occasion; nor, certainly, did I. She wasn't so well or widely known back then as she deserved to be and later was. It was easier to see her occasionally both in New York and Mississippi. I certainly admired her work and do still, but we have such a difference of approach, don't you think? I can't compare things like this when I am involved. The same for Faulkner. If my material seems like his, as I say, it must be that we are both looking at the same society. For instance, there is a Yocona River in North Mississippi; the family in *This Crooked Way* comes from Yocona, which I knew about all my life. People used to say "Yocny." Only long after the book was published did I realize that Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha probably had the same origin.

INTERVIEWER

What is the story of the publication of your first novel? Did you have help from anyone in placing it?

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SPENCER

I had written and sent off a number of short stories, and had had encouragement but no results. I started a novel based on some of these stories. I had been fortunate before that, though, in landing a graduate fellowship to Vanderbilt, ideal then, perhaps still, for anyone interested in creative study. The ghosts of the great—Ransom, Warren, and Tate—were still around, not that they were anything but alive then, but simply elsewhere. And one of the original members of the Agrarian group was still there, Donald Davidson, a superb teacher, one of the great minds I've known. I wandered away from Nashville, taught, returned to a job there, then worked on a newspaper as I said, then quit to work on my novel. Davidson knew I was working on it, and when David Clay, a New York editor with Dodd, Mead who had gone to Vanderbilt, came through, he brought us together. So within a short time of showing Clay the unfinished manuscript, I had my first contract.

INTERVIEWER

Did you, or do you, keep a journal?

SPENCER

I wish I had time to keep one. Sometimes I do; lots of good material comes along, just factual stuff, what I like to think about and make use of; but I forget it if I don't write it down. There will never be a shortage, however, of one inexhaustible thing—plain old life.

INTERVIEWER

Were you conscious of writing autobiographically in your first two novels? Those families seem so well-realized, it is difficult to think of them as fictional . . .

SPENCER

There is no autobiography in my early novels, or in any of the novels. Some of the stories, yes, but I can't find myself at all in the novels. I got in trouble, though, because people in our town all know each other, and have known about each

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other for generations, and because I had to draw on the locale, I found myself writing about people like them, though they weren't meant at all to be those people. But I've learned you can never tell anybody that what they want to believe isn't true. So no matter what I said, they still knew better, and I finally just gave up and didn't say anything. In *Fire in the Morning*, the portrait of my grandfather—a man I much admired—was deliberate, but all the events were fictional. Of course, there is a terrifying thing which may occur: *one sometimes invents what has actually happened*. This won't bear too much looking into.

INTERVIEWER

Your family was upset with you over the Mississippi novels?

SPENCER

My family was upset with me-as-novelist, especially my mother, because she couldn't make the jump to modern writing or to any published writing at all being done by anyone she *knew*. It was supposed to be done somewhere else by unknown hands. However, I could always "go home again," if that's what you mean. I live in Canada to be with my husband. Nobody is keeping me away. Mercy, they've got more to think about than just me.

INTERVIEWER

Whether you could "go home again" or not, you left the South for Italy, and then you left Italy for Canada. Why?

SPENCER

I got married in Italy to an Englishman and lived there a couple of years more, but my husband thought he could make a better go of things in Canada. His sister was in Montreal and wrote some good things about it and about Canada generally. His mother's family had been Canadian in origin.

INTERVIEWER

You didn't consider moving to the South?

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SPENCER

No, John found the South impossibly hot and overcrowded with my relatives, so we set out to try our luck in a place I never dreamed of even visiting, let alone settling down in! It was really the best compromise I could make, so I accepted it. I've grown to admire Canadians and to love Quebec, especially Montreal.

INTERVIEWER

Would you say that you are well-adjusted to Canada?

SPENCER

Oh, no, I can never "adjust" to losing anything I really love. I still miss the South; to a lesser degree, I still miss Italy. There's some argument for being able to stay in one region all your life, especially if your roots are there. Whether you write or not, there's a powerful element of feeling involved, and once uprooted, those feelings weaken. I don't think I've ever really cut the root; I never wanted to. But there's a loss of immediacy in one's experience. You have to count on memory more and daily rhythms less. But memory is a Muse, after all, a girl with a vital life of her own.

INTERVIEWER

What is the function of locale in your work?

SPENCER

Some of my suburban or city-apartment stories could occur just anywhere, but these go only for a few pages. Generally I think of fiction through people in a place. They are particular people in a particular place. "Who" and "where" is then quickly followed by "when" and "what" and "how." "Why" relates to ideas. I think southerners are strong on ideas, but in a different way from writers elsewhere. I must be careful not to make a silly generalization, but my feeling is that Southern writers (southerners generally) do not perceive any idea as abstract. We move toward an idea gingerly. Once formed, it is powerful and may eat you up. It's better to keep it young and

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playful as long as possible. But the way the Southern mind seems to work is through particulars, through felt character, experienced atmosphere. Isn't life like that? We live it, only half-knowing what it is, aware of possibilities all along but often mistaken as to their full meaning. Then time may change it all, throw it in a new perspective. A strongly-felt locale and a strongly-felt character in it—these are usually the starting places of my work. I can see both—character and place—in my head. A person, or persons, in a place, something on their minds, a confrontation, an event, a fragment of memory, an action, something to start you watching it, your mind following it. . . .

INTERVIEWER

Once you have your locale, and your characters, how rigidly do you plan your novels? They seem extremely well-made.

SPENCER

I plan most novels ahead, they don't just happen. I think all the characters in them live in them as though the form were a house and they were the people, and none other, who resided there. Some characters have come to the novels out of stories, and some have migrated from one novel to another. I do not plan so far ahead for stories; it does seem that a story is a more spontaneous creative act. I sometimes just drop down and write a story. I could never ever do a novel like that. Both *The Light in the Piazza* and *Knights and Dragons* started as stories, but there came a moment when I had to see them as longer works, to stop and consider.

INTERVIEWER

Many of your characters seem to be "loners." Why would you choose this type of character above all others?

SPENCER

I guess I'm a mixture of sometimes wanting to be off alone somewhere strange, and sometimes liking people, desiring company. But "loner" characters are good to have in a work

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of fiction. They have a perspective, are less easily involved in an action; they can comment, are apt to be ironic, compassionate, witty, perceptive.

INTERVIEWER

Is all your travel helpful to your work?

SPENCER

I don't feel that I travel all that much. The trip to Greece in 1977 was my first in a long time, and my first ever to Greece. I was thrilled with Greece—a place I'd always wanted to go. I visited a Canadian writer, Audrey Thomas, for a time. She had part of a house in a fishing village on the south coast of Crete, Aghia Gallini. I loved the life. We swam twice a day. I used to go down early and see them bring the catch off the fishing boats, and the farmers coming into the square with loads of fresh melons used to whack them open and give me sample slices to eat. The whole town knew everybody. The woman who owned the house had a loom in the parlor. I watched her weave. Every morning about a hundred donkeys began to go *heehaw . . . heehaw . . . heeeeeehaw. . . .* Just like Mississippi. Greece inspired the South somewhere along the line. I love the whole Mediterranean world. I think most people do. Maybe it's a buried racial memory and we all came from there.

INTERVIEWER

What differences have you perceived between American and Canadian literature?

SPENCER

That's an interesting question. Canadian literature has made a worthy, self-conscious effort to be itself just in the last ten years or so. Which is to say there is some needed walling-out of American influences. Still, many have noticed comparisons. Alice Munro's studies of small-town western life owe much to her reading of the southern writers; I think she told me that herself. Think of Margaret Laurence and Willa Cather. Parallels

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abound between French Canada and the South—a conquered society with different customs having to exist in terms of a larger, controlling nation, for instance. The French here have their own language, to give them unity, centrality. But it, of course, restricts their audience. Still, Marie-Claire Blais is widely translated, as is Anne Hébert. Less well-known are such good novelists as André Langevin and Hubert Aquin. There are similarities between Blais and Carson McCullers; and Hébert has a historical sense of French Canada—one looks to the Southern writers like Andrew Lytle for comparison. Novels that, to my mind, are *just* Canadian, without any possible reference to another society, are Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and Timothy Findlay's *The Wars*. I admire Robertson Davies, his *Fifth Business* especially. But it is rather a special case.

INTERVIEWER

Are you at all conscious of being a woman writer? That is, a women who writes fiction?

SPENCER

At the start, I felt put off by sensitive women writers whom I'd read but did not want to be like, even though I'd started by admiring them. I mean someone like Katherine Mansfield, then later Virginia Woolf. I thought both were over-lyrical, not nearly tough enough. So I tried to get a natural bent to lyricism (I had started out in college writing poetry) out of my style, to develop a plainly-stated, hearty style—hospitable to sensitivity but not dependent on it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you mind the term "woman writer"?

SPENCER

Would you mind the term "man writer"? "Woman writer" is just next door to "lady writer." I wanted to be firm and even tough-minded—if not "tough" in the Hemingway sense—a novelist only, as distinct from a woman novelist. That was my early reaction—it had nothing to do with women's lib, of

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course—but I think for me it was the right beginning. Even in *Fire in the Morning*, my first book, I originally wrote long, lyrical, girlish passages about the young woman who came to that town from a past outside it and married the central character. I had looked on it at first as primarily her story, as it might indeed have been if I could have got my prose to measure up. I think I was too girlish then myself to write well about her various sensitivities, hesitations, et cetera. My first editor urged me to cut all that out, so little of it remains, enough I guess to see what the rest might be like; and the weight of the book fell on the men and some of the older women who were part of the town, and they held it up.

INTERVIEWER

How do you determine from what point of view to tell a story? *This Crooked Way*, for instance, has four parts in the first person, only one part in the third person. Why not all five in the first person?

SPENCER

Point of view usually comes with the story in my mind and can't be changed very fundamentally afterwards. I know that "trying from a different point of view" is a recommendation in creative writing workshops, but I could never do it; the whole integrates at once in one way, and there's just no disintegrating it. In the novel you ask about, I had the problem with point of view toward a central character, who was primarily obsessed—a God-driven person. I had some straining to do, but I felt I had to arrange significant points of view around this figure. How could he be able to assess his own story and have the reader believe that his assessment could be reliable? So I balanced around him certain voices—a former best friend, a niece, then with deeper significance, his wife, then back to him again for the finale. This was experiment, if you like, but I think it had to be done that way to get the total picture.

INTERVIEWER

And why was one part, the beginning, in the third person?

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SPENCER

It was my way of coming in from the outside, to lead both myself and the reader into the story. The third person is admirable for its power to move inward, then enclose.

INTERVIEWER

What are your feelings about "experimental prose"?

SPENCER

Writing is always an experiment. But, on the whole, I guess I am anxious to be understood, to be clear. That leaves out "experimental," to put it in its usual meaning. Flannery O'Connor once said, "If it looks funny on the page, I don't read it."

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider yourself a religious person? *This Crooked Way* is really about religion.

SPENCER

I was brought up to be very religious and sent to a Presbyterian school, so at various periods of my life I have felt close to that sort of thing. I think I have a feeling for the Protestant Southern experience just from seeing so much of it, as well as from some personal participation when I was growing up. There's a lot of variety in it, but it's mainly Bible-based. In 1975 when my father was in his late eighties, I was home to see about him and saw he had brought in some large pieces of petrified wood from a small cattle place he had near town. He said, "I reckon those things have been there since the Flood." I said, "What flood?" He said, "*The* Flood!" Well, the Mississippi River had been known to break out in notable floods, but I never knew the high water to get up to our town, which is in the hill section. I pursued: "You mean 1927?" He got angry: "I mean the Flood in the Bible!" That one, of course, covered the whole earth, involved Noah's Ark, and presumably left petrified wood outside of Carrollton, Mississippi!

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INTERVIEWER

Your mother was just as religious?

SPENCER

She saw the Hand of the Lord everywhere. I remember when the British army retreated from the continent at Dunkirk, she remarked that the Lord had sent a fog to cover them. Being a Presbyterian, she got upset when people made fun of "predestination," but hoped to retreat with dignity by saying it was clearly set forth in the Bible. She took it for granted that everybody believed in the Bible or that if they didn't, they knew they ought to.

INTERVIEWER

Is there such a thing as an ideal reader you write for?

SPENCER

I never think of any one reader. But I do hope to be a source of interest and delight to those who want to follow me, which excludes, I guess, certain kinds of readership. It would mainly exclude, I hope, people who want to see life only from one aspect—sex, religion, politics, even "Southernness." I doubt if those who have special interests find my work offers a great satisfaction. I'm a questioner, a searcher . . . I'd like to interest people who are that, too.

INTERVIEWER

Your books all have beautiful titles. How do you find them?

SPENCER

I like to choose around till I find the right one. There's always an original impulse toward writing a work which has not yet been formed. When I look for a title I go back to that. *The Voice at the Back Door* . . . when I thought of the South and race, the blacks, I first remember how black servants of ours or blacks we knew would come to our back door when they were in trouble, they would stand and call out of the night. It was further considered a breach of custom for a black—or

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Negro, as we called them then—to come to the front door. In our whole town, I think, only our old nurse, Aunt Lucy Breckinridge, was permitted that. She was born a slave. In a recent program on William Faulkner, photographed at Oxford, a black man told about the old family nurse doing the same thing, going in through the Faulkner's front door. I doubt anyone not born down there would know the significance. So I went back to that germinal thing, that small but significant custom, for that title.

INTERVIEWER

What about the title, *The Light in the Piazza*?

SPENCER

You like that title?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

SPENCER

At the publisher's, they jokingly referred to it as *The Light in the Pizza*! Oh, well. As a title, I hope it functions several ways. There is the duality of the word "light"—the real light in Italy, so beautiful and strong that one feels one can see everything. Then there's the symbolic meaning, that's pointed up a number of times in the book, light and enlightenment, I suppose. And of course Clara's name itself—her name means light. I was also playing up comic aspects of the novel in the title, but most people missed that. I once said, in an interview in *Mississippi Quarterly* where the same thing came up, that just when you think you can see everything, the motives of these characters and what they are actually doing and why they are doing them are all totally opaque. The poor girl's mother stayed in a state of confusion all the way through.

INTERVIEWER

I'm glad you mentioned the significance of Clara's name. Many of your characters' names seem tip-offs to their function

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or meaning, such as Jimmy *Tallant*, Jerry *Sasser*, Beckwith *Dozer*. . . .

SPENCER

I generally name my characters the way I do because that is their name. Sasser I see no significance in; Sasser is a fairly common name in the South. Clara did, of course, have the tie-in to light.

INTERVIEWER

What about symbols, then? Are there any that you consciously utilize? There seem to be a lot of horses in your novels and stories, horses used in a Lawrentian sense of sensual power. . . .

SPENCER

There are certain recurrent figures in my work, I know. I guess I am drawn to write over and over about horses because of a fascination I feel for them. One of my stories is called "The Girl Who Loved Horses." I was brought up around animals, and for riding I had first a donkey, then ponies, then horses. We lived on the outskirts of a little town, had a big property with a barn, kept mules and cows. It was no trouble to feed ponies and later a couple of riding horses, nothing fine though. I was lonely in the winters when none of my cousins were around and outdoor sports were practically impossible. So I used to ride a lot, alone. Then, on my uncle's plantation, I would ride with him some summers almost every day. In those days, you had to ride a horse around a plantation to see what was going on. I rode at school, too, and wherever I happened to be. At Oxford, at the University of Mississippi, when I was teaching there I kept a horse the whole time. So horses crop up in my stories—pun not intended. I think I love them aesthetically; actually I'm a little afraid of them, of the spirited ones; part of riding excitement is in the tension. I've been run away with, thrown, bitten and kicked, though not in the head, I'll have you know!

INTERVIEWER

Are you conscious of any other symbols?

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SPENCER

Storms show up in my work a lot too, for much the same reason; they were fierce, dangerous, sometimes awesome around where I lived. Listen, if you want to find a symbol, there's nothing stopping you. Symbols should be like that in stories; not hauled in, but rising out of the possible, in feeling, and event.

INTERVIEWER

Some of the events in your later fiction seem improbable, like Arnie mounting the large sea turtle he meets while swimming and proclaiming, "Take me to the deep," in *The Salt Line*. Such events give your work a dream-like quality. Any comment?

SPENCER

It may be that most of these actually happened. The South is semi-tropical, near the coast especially, and many events partake of the strange natural phenomena in the area. South American fiction often sounds fantastic, but I bet a lot of it is to be thought of as actual. The sea turtle episode was related to me by my father. He used to go with a group on a chartered boat to fish in the Gulf. They once went ashore on a small island and there in the shallows one of them discovered a giant turtle which he rode out to sea for a distance. My usual theory is not to invent very much, only uncover what happens anyway, "strange as it seems."

INTERVIEWER

I've been wanting to ask you: is *The Light in the Piazza* your glory, or your albatross? Its fame, I mean.

SPENCER

It's my albatross. I think that it has great charm, and it probably is the real thing, a work written under great compulsion, while I was under the spell of Italy. But it only took me, all told, about a month to write, whereas some of my other novels—the longer ones—took years. So to have people come up to me, as they do, and gush about *The Light in the Piazza*,

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and be totally ignorant that I ever turned a hand at anything else, is . . . upsetting. I suppose I should be grateful they've read that. You know, I always thought it was so nice of President Kennedy to have said when he met Norman Mailer at the White House, "I've read *The Deer Park* . . . and the others." The fact that Kennedy didn't come out with *The Naked and the Dead* must have been gratifying to Mailer.

INTERVIEWER

How do you feel about money, in relation to serious writing? Would you write better if you had more or less of it?

SPENCER

It's nice to have it. It's ideal not to have money worries. However, writers have always proved their work can exist in extreme poverty or extreme wealth. . . . Personally, I just like to be well enough off. I've written under very poor circumstances and made do on a daily basis only by counting pennies and sometimes even dropping in on church suppers to cease from a diet of peanut butter sandwiches. I don't know if I wrote better then; it just seemed a nuisance.

INTERVIEWER

Have there ever been long periods when you could not write?

SPENCER

During the last decade, when my parents were in a long decline—they have since died—I was needed to help them out a good bit and I was disturbed by their aging, the whole implacable process of it. I did mainly short things during this time and found that any longer thing I attempted was broken up by recurrent problems. Otherwise, I am sometimes stopped in my work by a normal course of having finished up one crop and having to put in a whole new planting. This is gradual, almost a natural process of replenishment, and I get impatient while it's happening and think the whole thing's over, I'll never write again. Then I do.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you reread your own books?

SPENCER

I often have to, to get together readings or comments. But not all of anything, I think. I feel I've heard it all already. I'm sometimes surprised that I let such awkward parts get by, and occasionally that I could have possibly written anything so good.

INTERVIEWER

Have your sensibilities changed over the years?

SPENCER

There were many things I couldn't see clearly when I was younger and I was inclined to make judgments about them out of ignorance. I don't know if there has been a change or a deepening of sensibility. If either, I hope my work reflects it!

INTERVIEWER

One thing I had in mind was that your later novels, especially *The Snare* and *The Salt Line*, seem built upon a fascination with the underworld—criminals and counter-cultures not found anywhere in your early work. Have you lived among such people in recent years?

SPENCER

My husband would thank you for that! No, I don't know much about such people, except what I make up. Of course, I've read, inquired, and nosed around. I'm fascinated by these people, because they play by another set of rules, are in opposition to values we assume. Therefore, they can throw our values in relief, not so much by directly questioning them, as precocious children do, but simply by running counter to them. I don't know anything about criminal types except at second hand, i.e., reading, talking to people who know them, thinking of places where the boundaries are thin between the crooked and the straight. Everybody has something in his

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nature that's in the shadow world. I find a good deal of fun in imagining these parts, and just have to hope the underworld passages are convincing.

INTERVIEWER

How much of writing has to be first-hand experience?

SPENCER

That's an old question. My feeling about using such things is that anyone has got to be aware of the dark side of life; it gets into all human relationships, be they ever so joyful, balanced, and wise. No way around it. At a certain swivel of circumstances, the saint may turn into a devil; frightening but true. So when one brings on the scene the admitted crook or outcast or underworld figure, one is really just dramatizing what is latent in the nice little boy next door, or in one's old Sunday School teacher, the high school principal, or the U.S. President, and the next is—guess who?—one's self.

INTERVIEWER

Given to thinking like that, does being a writer make relationships more difficult?

SPENCER

I've found there are many different temperaments among writers. I am personally often distracted, absent-minded, fractious and anxious. I guess this makes me difficult at times. It's nice to be able to say, *Well, you see, I'm a writer*, especially if it saves you from losing a friendship or getting kicked in the behind.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think you could have been as happy, or less happy, if you hadn't become a writer?

SPENCER

I think I would be far less happy without a creative outlet.

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Everybody needs one in some form, to some extent. I'm just glad I found mine in writing, and early on.

INTERVIEWER

Finally, do you have any advice to give young writers?

SPENCER

Writing is hard work and guarantees no security, no rewards or pensions—it can't promise you anything. Bearing that in mind, you go ahead with it because you love it. Any art has the aspects of a love affair, life-long.

—**Robert Phillips**

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Two Poems by Charlie Smith

This Holy Enterprise

The troubled entrepreneurs of evening—
the palm-readers, the Mexican bracelet salesmen,
the girl who dances on a sheet of tin—
call out to me, turning for one second
their voices into instruments of love and attention,
promising love and attention, the Grail
of whatever singular prize I have longed for
and now found. I honor them all,
as I honor the priests
and the women who scream at the rain,
as I honor the envelope of bills and silver change
the boss hands me on Saturdays
saying *This is my body*. I have come around
to a pure absolution, gained—like a handful of grain
from the lords—by obedience, so that if I lie
all day Sunday like an effigy of myself,
harmless on the bed,
listening to the rants and vows
rising from the street, it is not because
I consider myself grandee of a greater enterprise,
but a child who listens at the door of his parents' room,
spellbound by the explanations they offer each other
as to why the world moves
like a brutish uncle, drunk, through the house.
It is a tone I listen for, an inflexion,
the moment when the argument breaks down
because someone can't take it anymore.

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Aquarium

After the sporty dolphin show
you might wander down the dimmed aqua stairs
into a darkness they have cut windows
through, to see beyond the foggy glass
all fishes swimming. It's not a glass bowl,
but like the earth itself cut through,
so that you are a traveler
rising from the interior to this first glimpse
at the teeming world. They circle slowly: sharks,
jewfish, yellow fin; a stately manta pumps
its black wings, soars toward
the chopped surface, sinks into a turn, and disappears.
It is some kind of lion with the lamb business,
all these varieties, cold killers and dumb
swimmers, schoolers, the lonely blue-throated
pilot fish, speckled distraught octopi
jammed under rocks. You have come out of sunlight
maybe, from the jaunty tricks
of trained porpoises who ring bells and
toss a ball and bark like crazy dogs, but down here
where it smells like the sea bed, and your schooling
neighbors
move shadily to grasp—as that man does—the
sills of small rectangular portals, holding
tightly as if onto the railing
above a gorge, and the slab side of a grouper
slides into view and you see the black incurious eye
unblinking,
and the next,
and the light shafts down
to strike the hard back of a channel bass,
the cocked fin of a sawfish, you discover
another version of privacy in this voyeur's

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den; like walking in on your father after the operation,
where as the black monitor ticks
its sad declarations you meet the gray dragged face,
the gray hand groping at the broken dorsal of his sex,
the gray, foolish smile he lifts and lets go
in the dust-stirred, murky room
that is like a tank you are both trapped in.

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Alison Stone

Ink Threads

We scatter rainbow
Markers on the rug
And make a diagram of people in the cast.
Most of them
Left high school years ago
But aren't older than Jenni. Everyone
Is older than me.

Red is the crush color
With an arrow pointing
Toward the one desired.

Sex is black with arrows
Pointing both ways.
Most of it is friendship sex,
A congenial way
To pass the dawn. When we think
That there's love involved
We put a red line there as well.

Jenni puts red arrows
Toward all the boys
But Mark, who's been there longer
Than us and hasn't moved up at all.
I love Paul, who's slept with every
Guy and one exception,
A skinny, cat-eyed stripper. Almost all
The males are gay. Jenni and I
Are straight. Three weeks later
She'll decide she isn't.

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Soon our slashes
Start to overwhelm the page.
Every third person is joined by sex. We are
More connected than we'd thought,
Bound with all the others
In a black and scarlet web.

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Robert Bensen

Blue Room

So hot the shore we drove through four states
to reach stays dazed a skipping-stone's throw
beyond the window, though the tide creeps out,
creeps in, a tease like the hem of a camisole

riding a shimmer of hip. How soundly,
how soundlessly you doze on the crumpled bedclothes,
random-limbed, adrift in a room newly papered
in blue flowers and the saffron dust of pollen.

The old fan bumping on the sill
keeps pumping hot air through the room,
chatters against the shifty wind, lags,
then chops back up to speed again.

There's less moral here than mirth,
no plea for convoluted love or its steamy
aftermath—just a mildly overheated cheer
for the racketing breeze that persists
beyond your hand's replacing your ascending shift
in its somnambulant semblance of modesty.

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Two Poems by Louise Erdrich

The Fence

Then one day the gray rags vanish
and the sweet wind rattles her sash.
Her secrets bloom hot. I'm wild for everything.
My body is a golden armor around my unborn child's
body,
and I'll die happy, here on the ground.
I bend to the mixture of dirt, chopped hay,
grindings of coffee from our dark winter breakfasts.
I spoon the rich substance around the acid-loving shrubs.
I tear down last year's drunken vines,
pull the black rug off the bed of asparagus
and lie there, knowing by June I'll push the baby out
as easily as seed wings fold back from the cotyledon.
I see the first leaf already, the veined tongue
rigid between the thighs of the runner beans.
I know how the shoot will complicate itself
as roots fill the trench.
Here is the link fence, the stem doubling toward it,
and something I've never witnessed.
One moment the young plant trembles on its stalk.
The next, it has already gripped the wire.
Now it will continue to climb, dragging rude blossoms
to the other side
until in summer fruit like green scimitars,
the frieze of vines, the small body
spread before me in its need
drinking light from the shifting wall of my body,
and its fingers, tiny stems wavering to mine,
flexing for the ascent.

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Birth

When they were wild
When they were not yet human
When they could have been anything,
I was on the other side ready with milk to lure them,
And their father, too, the name like a net in his hands.

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Kim Addonizio

Pantoum: At Mount Hebron

for Zelman

This cemetery is no haven,
old Jews waving at you
offering Kaddish for a few dollars,
cars crowding the two roads through—

Old Jews waving at you
beginning their prayers, bowing and bowing,
cars crowding the two roads through
and you walk along the rows. All the sons

beginning their prayers, bowing and bowing.
You stand before your father
and you walk along the rows
going on and on.

You stand before your father
where you stood all your life
going on and on
with words he can't hear.

Where you stood all your life
was the same place: offering your love
with words he couldn't hear.
This cemetery is no haven.

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The French Revolution

Niccolò Tucci

May 15, 1959 . . .

That day I could not work because the sky was grey. The day before I had not worked because the sky was blue. I left the Public Library, where I was working at my history of the French Revolution (a work I could no longer do at home because the view from my apartment made me nervous), and decided to take a short walk on Fifth Avenue, uptown of course, because to walk downtown would have been fatal to my work. That section of Fifth Avenue destroys the mental background against which I can work on pre-revolutionary France. So I came down the steps keeping myself slightly to the left of center and without looking in front of me, because that view is also fatal to my work. I reached the first level before the steps, that large section behind the lions, stretching all the way from Forty-second to Fortieth, and hesitated before taking what might have been a fatal course. Should I walk down *straight* from there, then turn left, that is, uptown, once I had reached the sidewalk? Or should I walk down *obliquely* from there, on an almost diagonal line of an imaginary rectangle covering the

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whole area between the foot of the stairs and the sidewalk, from my position left of center to the left end of the stairs? And in case I decided for this diagonal walk, should I pass very close to the uptown lion, almost brushing its pedestal with my left shoulder, and reach the sidewalk still in that diagonal line? Yet another route meant reaching another major decision when I came to the flagpole: pass it, either on the right or the left side, with consequences no one could possibly foresee.

And then and then . . . What about the benches, namely the benches in the number of three? Three benches, even when empty, which is often the case on a grey day, have definitely a meaning all by themselves.

That day the distribution of humanity over that open space was as follows: one bum per bench, seated exactly on the middle of the bench. That was an element of fact in the prospect before me not to be disregarded, and almost making it imperative to abandon at once every idea of the diagonal way out, either brushing the southeast pedestal with my left shoulder or *not* brushing it at all. Three symmetrical bums on three benches. And no one seated under the flagpole asymmetrically or otherwise. I could pass close to those bums counting three or a multiple of three and close my eyes or touch the nail of the third finger of my left hand with the nail of the third finger of my right hand. That might either not help at all, or help beyond all hope, but it would certainly not harm. There remained the outer railing, of course, along which the distribution of humanity was not at all pleasing. On the contrary. There were two men and a women first and *then* a fourth man. A conundrum. Far from harmless.

I could have walked close to them and done something, such as stop breathing, or I could have disregarded them altogether to concentrate on my three bums and pass them triumphantly. I knew now what those three bums were supposed to stand for: my finishing the book. If I could pass those bums while they were still symmetrically seated there, I would finish the book in something three: either three days (impossible) or three months (why not? most certainly), or three years (God forbid!). To offset this last possibility, which seemed disas-

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trous, I crossed my fingers on both hands and spat three times in front of me. A light wind rose and made it necessary for me to wipe my face with the back of my hand (first one hand, then the other, to keep the symmetry alive).

One of the bums, the one seated closest to Forty-second Street, got up and stretched himself. I waited, in despair. Would he sit down again? Or was it good that he got up, having no function to perform in the symbolization of my future? Did he *stand* for "three years"? Did his getting up mean that the "three years" were confirmed or discarded as an answer? And was it better now to wait for the rest of the symmetry to fall apart, or should I not rather nail it down with my passage, thus weaving that part of the symmetry into the cloth of my personal destiny? Perhaps it was better to wait and see whether the now missing link of the "three" symmetry would go back to its place or not? He stretched himself and kept stretching himself, and there was no way to tell whether he would sit down again or not. Instinctively, I searched my right-hand pocket for something, and a fraction of a second later I knew what: salt. Yes, salt, the small package of salt stolen by me in the kitchen when I was very young to put on the tails of the sparrows in the park. The instinctive gesture had been repeated now, at the distance of years and years. How strange.

And, strangely enough, he sat down again, exactly where he had been sitting before. This was the time to catch him. I began to move on tiptoe, at once searching my pocket for salt, and this realization cheered me up for an instant, and of course damaged me. It made me waste the time it would have taken me to parade in front of the three wishing for my book to be finished and sold to the Oxford University Press in exactly three months. There I stood, staring into the void, to recapture that image of myself as an innocent little boy of eight, still running after sparrows with his pockets full of salt. The fact of looking intently at something that is not there at all brought to my mind by association the ending of that sonnet of Shakespeare's: "Save that my mind's imaginary sight/ Presents thy image to my sightless view/ Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night/ Makes dark night beauteous and her

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old face new./ Lo thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind/ For thee and for myself no quiet find."

And these beautiful verses made me realize at once that I was not unhappy at all. Which made me sad. Too much quiet for me, by day my limbs, by night my mind found too much quiet for their own good. I lived in idleness, unmoved by anything, still in front of that obstacle that had been there for years, growing thicker and higher by the day: my reference material, my notes, my hundreds of unfinished "beginnings" of the first chapter of that book. As I emerged from these sad thoughts the three bums were still there, but one had moved to the end of his bench, to play with a pigeon and a few crusts of bread he had pulled out of his pockets. The other two had consorted on the same bench, and the third bench was momentarily occupied by the briefcase of a man who used to sit across the desk from me in the library (room 221): a Russian. And he was now discussing something with Kerensky, another library fixture. *Kerensky*, Alexander Feodorovitch, discussing ancient politics as if they were tomorrow's move on the chessboard of History. No use for me to change my old itinerary now and reach Fifth Avenue by means of the upper platform rather than the diagonal passing of the uptown lion. Perhaps this meant that I would never even come close to finishing my book in three months. There were good reasons for "reading" this prognosis in my hesitance. I had been standing close to the first bum, representing "three days," an impossible goal. Or almost impossible. Why "almost"? Because I knew that I knew everything connected with my subject matter so well that, if conditions were for once ideal, I could really sit down and write the whole book in three days, as I had done seventeen years before with my first book, "The Political City and Marketplace City in the High Middle Ages." Never again had I been able to write such a good book. Not a single correction. Everything in its place, and of course everything rehearsed and checked and weighed far in advance. Three days of such intense work that I emerged from it not knowing how much time had passed. I knew that if this damn weather were not constantly in my way, I could still do it in three days, especially

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as most of this new book had already been written nine times and then discarded, lost, or found too good not to use it exactly as I had written it. Which meant inserting it into the rest of the material. Which in turn meant writing the rest on the same level of conciseness, perfection, brilliancy, etc. But anyway, three days probably would have been an impossible goal by now. I would have contented myself with three months. The second bum represented three months, and I had not moved one step further in that direction. Bad sign. Thus my reading had been right. Those three bums did represent my future chances and my present and constant stupidity in dealing with them.

In an impulse of energy and revolt against laziness, I ran back to the library and up the stairs (the uptown stairs of course—never have I used the downtown stairs to go up, I would not do such a thing, especially because I don't know what it might *mean*). I ran back to room 221, anxious to storm my typewriter with a completely new beginning and continue uninterruptedly until I was chased out of the library at ten that night, but something stopped me. Rather than some*thing*, some*one*, a man who has since died, and whose influence on me was either good or bad, according to some elements around us I had never been able to detect. This man was Mehmet Aga Oglu, a Turkish scholar who worked in the Near East Division all day long seven days a week. Oh, how he worked! How happily, how without any restraint either from the weather, the person sitting across the desk from him, the smell of books from the stacks, of disinfectant from the floors, of soot from the city, of wet wool from the bums seated like disenchanted birds on the cold marble benches in the corridors, or any other smell. Aga Oglu was happy, and his output was huge. Articles, book reviews, books, more articles, more book reviews, more books, all the time all the time, without any regard for those who could not work. That day he saw me as I was just about to run back to my typewriter and begin my three days of real work, and he said, "Come with me, let's have lunch."

"But it is only eleven thirty," I said, looking at the clock in

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the corridor, right above the white, naked woman, a cheap sculpture that has never brought me the least bit of luck and I don't know why they must keep it there.

"So what?" he said. "Are you such a conformist that you must wait for the hour when all the slaves go out of their prisons and have their daily bite? You don't eat anything anyway, so let me invite you; I shall eat and you will talk, which makes you such an ideal, inexpensive guest to have."

This was true. I carried my own carrot in my briefcase and ate it usually while doing my work, and then I often lunched with Aga Oglu, that is, I talked and he ate. But to hear it all mentioned in that happy, carefree tone, as if my work, my time and my ideas were of no value at all except to entertain my friends, hurt me so deeply that I said, "No. You have lunch alone. I want to work."

"Come on," he said. "Who wants to work? What for? Why write books? Who will read them anyway?"

"Well," I said, a bit angry by now, "this does not seem to deter you from writing."

"Not in the least," he said, laughing. "In fact," he added tactlessly, "I have written an article this morning. In less than two hours. Here it is. Read it. But don't lose it, it is my only copy of course, as I write in longhand."

I looked at it, and at once became curious and envious. It was an article on the conception of the sky in Ancient Egypt as a green stone. Well written, eminently readable, amusing, crammed with historical facts beyond all doubt, and long. I tried to count the pages, and each additional page depressed me as bad news. "Twenty-two pages," I said, "and in your small handwriting!" I looked at him, hoping that he would justify himself.

Instead of which, he said, "Yes. A good piece of work, I must say. I am giving myself a brief vacation now, shall waste two hours, have an expensive lunch to which I am still inviting you, hoping that you will honor me this time by eating steak or anything you like, and then, this afternoon, I have another article to do, and I hope by tomorrow to put the finishing touch to my book."

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"Your book?" I asked, in a faint voice.

"My book," he said. "A new one, not the one you saw a few months ago."

"Oh."

He noticed my depression. "You look depressed," he said, in a brotherly tone that made me at once forgive him for having worked so much. "How is your work doing?"

"Very badly. I'll never finish that damned work."

"Still the eve of the French Revolution?" he said. "You are delaying it too much. You must have a feudal complex, that is what makes you delay the advent of liberty."

"No joke," I said, "this is quite serious."

"Oh come on, it is not. Why say you'll never finish it? What prevents you, the weather?"

"Yes, precisely the weather today."

"Like yesterday. Which shows that you need a good interruption. The beginning I read is really masterly. Go on in that same vein and you will finish it, if not in three days, as you finished your first book, then in three years, who cares?"

"I do," said I, and left him.

Back in room 221, I could not work. All my reference books stood there, lined up like troops, in front of me, their golden lettering and trimmings shining discreetly under the lamp, slips of pink, yellow, white paper sticking out of their pages, like feathers. On the right side of my typewriter, a pile of notes dating back fifteen years, some even twenty, and on my left, the briefcase bulging with so many old notes, new notes, old beginnings and new ones, that it had lost all shape and was torn at the seams. The handle, too, was torn, and the ligaments of my left shoulder were almost torn by the weight of that briefcase twice a day all the way from home to the library, by subway, bus or foot. And if I kept it on the desk, that damn briefcase stood in the way of the written page. If I put it on the floor, it invariably rolled on the shoes of my left-hand neighbor, whose feet and temper were both easily hurt. And on the shelf back of me there was hardly any room for my briefcase, as I had files and files of older "new beginnings" of my book. Across the seat from me, beyond the main defense

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line of my reference books, sat one Mr. Johnson of City College, who was writing a book on Charles Dickens. He seemed happy and engrossed in his own work, an egotist, I thought, like most people who work well. I knew the progress of his work by the number of pages set aside by him as they emerged from his typewriter, or rather by their bulk, and noticed an increase that disappointed me. Of course I did not envy him. I was happy for him, but did he realize? Obviously not. He smiled at me from above his typewriter, as if to say: "Isn't it wonderful how well we are working today?" That "we" disturbed me, even if not too clearly implied. Further down to the right across the table, Ted Draper was adding pages to his study of American Communism. He would soon finish it and publish it, I knew; both he and Johnson were headed for conclusion.

I left the room and ran upstairs, with paper in one hand and pencils in the other. There alone, in the South Reading Room, would I find inspiration again, and the strength to stick to it until my whole first chapter was completed. I must explain now that the South Reading Room, even though definitely within the downtown hemisphere of the library, is the only reading room where I can read, so much so in fact that even in room 221 I often suffer acute nostalgia for the South Reading Room, and run back to it for a brief stay (an hour or so), either to read or just to meditate. In the South Reading Room I keep my best thoughts stored away, up in the air, close to the ceiling, and I can be away from there for weeks; when I come back I find them there exactly as I have left them. This does not happen in the North Reading Room, even though they are two symmetrical sections of the same room, have the same ceiling. But not only can I not sit in the North Reading Room: I cannot even sit in the South Reading Room unless I sit at my seat, which is seat number 552, or, rarely enough and only in grave emergencies—seat 550. When 552 is occupied, I at once fill in a request for the biggest books I can get in the number of eight or nine (ten is the limit), all for seat 552, then sit next to it, or stand close to it, waiting for those books to arrive. When they arrive and the boy puts them on the table,

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the person occupying seat 552 protests, says the books were not ordered by him, the boy shows him the slip with the seat number marked on it, and I step in, to explain to the occupant of the seat why I had marked that number on my slip: habit, tradition, absolute necessity, and if the person is not considerate enough to understand my claims, I am forced to present them as real claims, which is extremely annoying, because one hates (unless one is really lacking in the most elementary respect for the rights of one's fellow human beings) to *ask* for things, to remind people of their duty. Now, with my guests on seat 552, I am glad to have them there, as long as I don't use the place, but when I come, I want them to understand at once and make room for me. And I must say that it usually works.

That day, unfortunately, it did not. I had to explain, despite the fact that our exchange of lively whispers disturbed everyone in that section of the reading room, as we could have foreseen (I had), and when I called the occupant's attention to this fact, he went back to his "reading," which was no reading at all. Being so close to him I had a chance to see what he was doing: he was a salesman of some sort, checking on hundreds of receipts or whatever those damn slips were, no work for libraries in any case, and he had also with him a large pad of cheap yellow paper on which he had been scribbling three beginnings of a letter to a Mr. McDougall, asking for a raise. What handwriting! And what a style! Three beginnings, one as cheap as the others. For a document of that type! At least I stood in awe before History itself, and not Mister McDougall. And my beginnings, one better than the other, had been praised by scholars and stylists. Seeing that he had gone back to his work, and the whole room in fact had gone back to its work, without giving a thought as to what was happening to me, I decided that I had every right on earth to think of myself alone, for once, and in a loud voice I asked the man: "Where are the books you asked for? Don't you know that to sit here you have to ask for books, not to come with your own? Or do your office work here?" This argument seemed to work. He looked at me with anguish, but not quite without arrogance yet. So I said, "Yes. This library, as you see written here on this

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sign right in front of you, is for the use of readers, not for outsiders." He looked down at his papers, then at me again, and then asked me: "Do you mind if I sit here for another two minutes?"

I am always too kind and unsuspecting, I should have learned the technique, after so many years, but I seem to be incorrigible. When someone asks me for a favor, I just cannot refuse. "All right," I said, "make it ten minutes." "Ten is too much," he said, "I have other things to do. Five will be plenty." So I sat next to him, not on seat 550, because that seat was occupied, too (I would never have made such a fuss had that seat been available), but on seat 554, which has never been my seat and where I had no intention to start working. You do that once, then it becomes a habit, and all the years you have been using your own traditional seat go for nothing. I looked at the sky, not the east-side sky, closest to me, but the sky beyond the whole reading room, the sky with the black and gold building on Fortieth Street, the sky with the green bronze top of the Wurlitzer Building and with another white and very ugly building that looks cheerful against the blue sky and sad in the grey sky. And I noticed that the cloud texture seemed even thinner than before, almost transparent in fact. This alarmed me. If the sky became blue, it would be the same thing as yesterday, when I had been unable to work because the sky was blue. I no longer suffer from the same anguish a blue sky used to give me when I was very young and actually feared the blue sky, but some of that complex must have remained with me. I don't know what gave origin to that first complex, it was probably what I had heard about the roundness of the world and the nature of space when I was still too young to understand these matters. This idea of the world all alone in that universe, with nothing to sustain it, not the four turtles, not the outstretched arm of Atlas, just the same up-down up-down everywhere, gave me a feeling of anguish that made me cling to chairs, tables and people when the sky was too blue. I looked at the sky and it appeared to me like a huge cup, or the inside of a bronze bell, then it grew into an ocean. I heard the sound of space breaking on the rock of the ages, I heard the swishing noise of planets as they unwrapped them-

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selves from their own nights or days, the moons (blind as the eyes of Greek statues, redder than apples, thinner than children's nails) scratching the silk of infinity, tearing it into shreds, all of these things I heard and saw, and my obsessive thought was: "If the world stopped even for a brief moment we would fall down into the sky like plaster from the ceiling, because the sky is down, what holds us is the invisible arm of the world's own rotation, and every point on the sphere is higher than all points surrounding it."

But the west window became solidly grey again. There must be wind outside. It was twelve–thirty. The occupant of 552 was still writing his letter to his Mr. McDougall, and I had done nothing at all. Much as I hate denouncing people, there was little I could do now. My neighbor looked at me, reading ideas for his damn letter from my eyes, instead of reading my unmistakable reproach. So I went to the person in charge of silence and respect for the law. It was, luckily for me, my friend Mrs. Vitali, a young and handsome white-haired woman who knows the art of speaking in the library: aloud, without making any noise. "Mrs. Vitali," I said, "you know I hate to be a nuisance, and I also hate to disturb readers, but there is a man there who has come with his office work and his private letters and has been using my chair and my space on the table for the last hour or so."

"Why that is horrible," she said. "Where is he?"

"There, you see? Where I usually sit. And he has ordered no books, so he is openly defying all the library rules. I called his attention to this . . . "

"But wait a moment," she said, "he has ordered books. Many of them, the biggest books in here this morning. I saw the boy as he was giving them to him and he seemed to protest."

"Those were my books, not his."

"Your books? But I haven't seen you read them. All you did was look out of the window. And besides, you had a seat there, in fact you had every seat from there to the shelves. Do you need more?"

"No," I said, "one seat will do, but it must be my seat."

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"Oh." And she laughed disrespectfully. Not that I want any respect from friends, I always welcome criticism, but there are moments when laughing seems out of place. She noticed this and tried to find an explanation which, with all due benefit of the doubt, sounded *false*, rather than true. "Don't mind my laughing," she said, "but something very silly happened here this morning, and every time I think of it, I must laugh. A pigeon flew in, there was a great commotion, no one knew how to get it out again, and an old reader, the one down there, you see? said: 'Oh, just give him a bookworm!' Don't you think that's funny?"

"No," I said. I went back to "my" seat, feeling that one is really alone most of the time in this intricate world of weathers, places and people, where everything seems to be against you, everyone takes advantage of you, either to be amused by you, if you are in the mood, or to laugh at you if you are not. I knew Mrs. Vitali well enough to credit her with a better sense of humor than she had now displayed. She was just a bit cruel and inconsiderate, like everyone else. No bad feelings on my part, of course. Only a greater solitude, that was all. My poor neighbor and usurper was still struggling with his image of a Mr. McDougall much more literary than he probably was. I pitied the poor man. He had five pages lying around fanwise, all five just the beginning of his letter, and all five "good," in his opinion. He was writing a sixth one, and from his pace, his hesitance, his pencil-biting, his window-staring, I could see that he would never make that the final beginning. He must have given up all his appointments if any, his office work, everything, and be torn between Mr. McDougall and his own wife, waiting for him at home with the terrible question: "Did you ask for that raise? Did you finish that letter?" I touched his left arm, he looked at me, recognized me as an item of his most distant memories, frowned terribly, sank right back into his stylistic thoughts. "One word," I whispered, smiling.

"Shhhhhh," he hissed, like a hurt snake.

My heart was beating fast, not with anger this time, with sheer emotion. I was watching myself being a Christian of the most exalted type, one who repays evil with Good, and this

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threatened to make me burst into tears at once. I like the Gospels after all, even if I am not a born church-goer. "Forgive me," I said, quite humbly. "I was unkind to you before, and indiscreet right now. I see you are having trouble with that letter. I have written a great many such letters in my life, am rather good at them, as a matter of fact. May I be of assistance to you?"

"Why yes," he said in a loud voice, and as we were being shoo-ed by others, I said, "Let's get out of here."

We left the reading room together (he was a rather sorry looking little victim of life, I must say) and, as we passed Mrs. Vitali, she made a gesture with her fists to ask whether I was going to fight it out with him. I looked at her, sternly, then looked away. We sat on one of the cold marble benches in the hall outside the catalogue room, and I asked the man: "Now tell me, first of all: what is it you want Mr. McDougall to do for you?"

"Well . . . you see . . . ," he said, "this is all very complicated. In fact I don't know that you can help me at all. I should first of all tell you who I am, who Mr. McDougall is, what he is, and how I happen . . ."

I interrupted him. "Don't tell me anything," I said. "Answer my question, as if I had known you for years, knew all about you and all about him. What do you want from him?"

"It is hard to tell. I really can't."

"Why can't you?"

"Because Mr. McDougall is a very important person, very high-placed, pigheaded, and . . . well, I can't explain. He wants things said with all the trimmings, and on the other hand I am not in a position to wait. He's got to come forward, he knows it, but, unless I say things just in the right style, reminding him of his duty without hurting his feelings . . . you know? It's hard. No, you can't help me. I'd have to tell you too many things that are none of your business, I'm sorry, thanks anyway, it was mighty nice of you."

"Wait, don't go. You don't have to tell me anything at all, except what you would tell McDougall if he were here, tied with a rope, and forced to listen to you."

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"What good would that do, it's all a dream anyway, I have no time to waste, really."

"Look, it won't take you more than five minutes, probably less. Tell me anyway, it will clarify your ideas, then you'll be able to write that damn letter."

He hesitated for a moment, then said: "Well, I would say: Dear Mr. McDougall, I hate to have to write this letter, but circumstances make it imperative for me to do so, I need that raise, I tried to postpone asking you for months, now everything is going to hell because I have no money, so please try to understand this, don't be angry at me, consider that I am still your friend, I shall never forget how much I owe you, infact, I would never write this letter if the situation had not become unbearable, Yours, etc."

While he was talking, I was taking down every word as if under dictation and when he finished, it took me another minute to catch up with his last words.

"Well, go back to your seat now, I'll be right with you. Don't leave until I come," I said, running downstairs to the second floor. In front of room 221 I found Aga Oglu with Luba Trobitschka, a freelance research worker in the Slavonic division.

"Are you through with your book?" asked Aga Oglu.

"No," I said.

"Too bad you turned down Aga Oglu's invitation," shouted Luba. "We just ate the most wonderful filet mignon and drank the most excellent French wine."

"And don't forget the dessert," said Aga Oglu to Luba.

"Oh yes, of course," she shouted, to transmit the good news to me. "You were a fool not to come with us. And he told me two wonderful new jokes. Come and hear those at least."

"I'm busy, I can't."

I rushed inside room 221, sat at my typewriter, transcribed more than copied, what I had scribbled on that piece of paper, while Aga Oglu and Luba, exchanging amused remarks about my feverish activity, looked on from a great distance.

I paid no attention to them, smiled at Johnson with his Charles Dickens, and everybody else in the room, smiled at

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Aga Oglu and Luba as I ran past them, and I got back to 552 where my man was still sweating on a seventh beginning of his letter. I signaled to him, he said no, he could not be disturbed, he almost had it. "Come anyway, I have it, too," I said. He followed me, incredulous, and I was really pleased with myself. It was the one good moment of that entire and most sinister day: the moment when my natural instinct to be brotherly and charitable, not with my friends but with my enemies, was satisfied. I did not have to be told by anyone, I *knew* I was a good Christian. So we went out to the hall, sat down again on a cold bench, and I gave him his letter, which he read while I was looking at the huge, ugly, disproportionate fresco representing Freedom of the Press. After a minute came the gratifying reaction. "What a wonderful letter! This is exactly what I wanted to say! How could you have guessed?"

"I never guessed, I never even wrote it. You wrote it. That is your letter."

"Nonsense. I did not tell you a thing."

"You told me exactly what I have written there. Here is the rough copy, I took this down while you were speaking to me. As simple as all that."

"Come on, you're kidding. I don't know a thing. I could not write a letter like that if they threatened me at gunpoint. And I mean it. Gee, it's grand. And it will get results! Gee, you are a real writer!"

"Well, there it is. Your work, not mine. I added nothing but the pencil."

"You mean to say . . ."

"I do."

He stopped to think for a moment, reread his masterpiece, then said, to *me*, as if I had to be informed of *his* discovery: "Well, my friend, this teaches you that I am pretty good, when it comes to letter writing. In fact, I am damn good. You yourself probably could never write such a good letter. Come to me next time, I'll write your letters, too." And he giggled and patted me on the back in the most vulgar manner. As we entered the reading room again, he said, "Thanks, my friend. You were useful, too. You know, I must be kind of neurotic,

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I have no faith in my genius. You taught me one must have faith. You had sized me up as quite a guy, hadn't you? And damn if you were right! Now, back to work. In a couple of hours . . ."

"Look," I said, grabbing him by the sleeve. "I have to tell you something. Let's go out for a second again."

"But I am busy."

"Just one second."

"Okay." He followed me to the catalogue room, but he was rather impatient.

"Listen," I said, "I need that seat now. I have sat there for years, every day. It is the only place in this whole library where I can read."

"What's the matter with you? You . . . kind of neurotic?"

"Er . . . if you wish . . . probably I am. We all are, more or less. Fact is I need that seat."

He paused for a moment, then said, "I don't know what it is, but I got sort of attached to it myself by now."

Had I been told that I must leave the United States at once, without even giving notice to my family, I could not have felt more panicky. It was not that I wanted that seat, in fact, I had been planning to go back to my typewriter and work there by now, it was the principle involved, the fact that I had waited all that time, and been kind to that man, done for him what no one these days would do for anyone, especially in a big city, where no one cares if you live, die, or what you do. Damn it, I was not going to stand for that kind of nonsense.

"Look," I said, "I waited all this time for you to give me back my seat. You said two minutes, I said ten, remember? You said five would be plenty, then you sat there for an hour, and you would still be sitting there, had I not dragged that letter out of you."

"But that's exactly it," he said. "I am beginning to understand that if I wrote such a good letter it was probably because of that particular seat. What do I know? I am not a man of libraries . . ."

I was speechless. He went on: "So I stumble by chance on a library secret, and here I am, a lucky guy."

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"How about me? The help you got from me?"

"Well, a minute ago you said you had done nothing. Now all of a sudden it's you who have written that letter. You crazy?"

"No. But I want my seat."

"What's the matter with that seat number anyway? There are hundreds of seats available, why do you want just mine?"

"Yours? That has been my seat for eight years."

"Just that seat? None other?"

"Exactly. It is the only seat where I can work."

"You superstitious?"

"Yes . . . if you want. Among many other things, I am that, too. Does it disturb you very much?"

"No, but I want to be superstitious, too. I want to try, at least. Might be a good idea, you never know."

My hands were trembling. "Now look . . . Why do you have to do that to me? What have I done to you to get this kind of treatment from you? To say the least: isn't it silly?"

"Well, that's what I'd like to know from you. Isn't it silly? You look like a man who knows a great deal. Isn't it silly that you have to use that seat and none other? Perhaps it isn't. You want me to believe it is, and I want to find out. I am the curious type, you've got to prove to me that there is no mystery about this. It's fun for me. I'm just curious, that's all."

And he walked back into the reading room, back to my seat. Never before had I felt so defeated. Never before had the truth of Crucifixion revealed itself so blatantly to me. Real Good is only answered with real Evil. And for what reason? Just because it IS so. I was standing there, numb, unaware of the fact that I was in everybody's way. When this, too, became clear to me, I slowly walked out into the corridor and stopped in front of every single one of those nineteenth-century prints of New York: the fires of downtown New York, New York seen from Brooklyn in 1848, with white houses and white sails hiding most of them, blue waters and blue skies and a few people looking on from under a green tree. Then, Fifth Avenue, downtown seen from the Reservoir (on the site of the Library) and Fifth Avenue uptown from the same place. The serenity

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and beauty of those old, clumsy houses, some of them very ugly, but with a future so serene and so constantly ascending, how one felt that . . . I looked at the Japanese prints in the Berg Collection, I peeped into the Manuscripts Room, where my friend Don Calhoun was working on his manuscript of the James Joyce bibliography, and was afraid of him. He might ask me about my work. The sun was shining, I could feel it, more than see it, from the relaxed expressions of those emerging from the slow elevator back of the corridors, and I almost rushed outside, but something kept me there. I must go back now, and recapture my seat. I was calm and composed, ready to face another battle.

I walked slowly back to the reading room, my pulse began to beat in fits, then stop, then beat again, my tongue was dry and sticking to the palate, my hands were trembling, but I was quite determined. It must be now or never.

But right before I entered the room, my eyes half closed and cast to the floor, a strong hand grabbed my right arm and shook it. My enemy. "You know," he said, "I really can't see a damn thing in superstition, I guess I'm not the type to try it out. Takes training. You foreigners are good at it, we'll never learn. Thanks anyway for letting me try. And thanks for that letter of mine you wrote. Made me feel grand. No hard feelings, I hope? Here's shaking hands. My name is Jack. Jack O'Hanrahan. Good man. Take care."

I had no words. I had too many tears. Of relief, shame and solitude. I ran back to my seat. The books were gone. They had been taken back. A little man I had seen many times before, a poor bum, neatly dressed and quite distinguished, was sitting on 550 and scribbling painfully with little stumps of yellow pencils, so small that he had trouble in keeping them between his fingers. I had five brand new pencils in my pocket, all of them sharp, and I placed them in front of me, on the side of the paper I had now taken out of my pocket. I decided that my next act of generosity would be in pencils, given to the poor man. A new trial of Christianity. One must never lose faith. After all Jack O'Hanrahan was a good man and I had been a fool. And everything was good now. The sun was shin-

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ing, yes, but I could work. The appeal of yellow paper (I almost always use it) on that beautiful wood of the library tables, with inlaid numbers, black on white, is very great. You spread the pages on the table, and the words fall down from that cloud on the ceiling (I still don't know whether it is a cloud or a stain of humidity of huge proportions). All you must do is rearrange them on paper. The first words fell. They were so clear, so good, so concise and so very much to the point: "The events leading up to the French Revolution. . ." Here I stopped, thought it over, and wrote, in parenthesis: "On the eve of the French Revolution . . . certain events. . ." Then continued with the first phrase, as I had done so often over so many years, day in and day out. Seeing that I had once more committed the mistake of thinking of past beginnings, I decided that a brief interruption would be good, and made this the occasion for my new little trial of Christianity. I turned to the poor devil on my left and noticed that he was writing in French, painfully as ever, with his old, blackened-out pencil stumps. So I took two, then three, then four of my best pencils and offered them to him, saying, in French, "Allow me, Sir, to suggest that you use one of these or all four, in the place of those stumps you are using. You may have reasons to prefer those," (this I said in order not to make him feel that he gave the impression of being too poor to buy himself a new pencil), "but I still think that you are wrong. Old stumps are infinitely better than long pencils, but they are cruel on the hand." He looked at me, thanked me in exactly the same elegant terms and at once praised my French, which was exactly what I had hoped he would do. My French in fact is very good, not grammatically so, I admit, but when it comes to pronunciation, I must say that the Comédie Française would profit by hiring me. "But I cannot accept this," he said, very politely, and I was moved to tears, seeing such great refinement in a bum. "Never mind," I said, "take them all. And take this, too." And I gave him a few sheets of my beautiful yellow paper, saying, "As a small tribute from one reader to another."

"Whom do I have to thank for so much kindness?" he asked, with a poise worthy of the greatest tradition.

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I wrote my name on a scrap of paper, giving seat 552 for an address, and he read my credentials, nodding and smiling like a king who receives a new ambassador.

"I am a poor devil like you," I added, bowing from my chair toward his until my forehead touched the arm of his chair. People were looking at us and laughing. Now he took a small scrap of his cheap paper and, using his new pencil with obvious satisfaction, he wrote his name and address and handed them to me. I read: Monsieur (I forget the first name) Goiran, Ancien Ambassadeur de France en retraite, Hotel Gramercy Park, New York." As I read this I felt shivers go down my spine. I knew the family quite well. I had even met him. "Were you not an Ambassador to Mexico until recently?" I asked.

"That is exact," he said, and I began to notice that he did not look like a bum at all. I had been looking at his pencils alone and not at him. Blushing, and in cold sweat, I said, "Of course, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur." Then, trying to sound as diplomatic as I could, "I remember quite well. I had dinner at your house here in New York, 300 Park Avenue, if I remember clearly, and this was back in 1937. Er . . . hm . . . You have a cousin who is an Italian admiral."

"Yes," he said, bowing slightly. "The Italian branch of the family."

"And a son in the diplomatic service."

"Your information is correct."

I proceeded to inform him of my achievements, and felt that they were meager, very meager. One book published in all, that book written in three days so many years ago. But he must know that I was not a fool, even though I was capable of mistaking a rich and cultured French ambassador for a beggar. (More and more shivers down my spine, every time I remembered the episode of a minute ago.) So I "published" all my unpublished works, thinking that after all this was only one tenth of a lie: the books were there, finished, some even to the point of being accepted by the publishers, and then withdrawn on second thought, so why tell him these personal details? As I proceeded to recite the long list of all my published works, other readers protested, so I rose from my seat

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and the Ambassador politely followed me into the hall where we sat on a cold bench, next to a real, unmistakable bum, and I went on, weaving brilliant scholarly remarks into my list of lies, so as to strengthen them. He was amazed at the bulk of my work, and this made me feel better, because my work is really amazing, those books exist, all of them (in my files), and then he asked me where he could purchase them, and I said, with true emotion in my voice: "Ah, mon ami, ce n'est pas la peine de jetter votre argent pour mes modestes travaux," and he assured me that he was genuinely interested, so I promised I would find them and bring them to him, those of course I could spare. Then I asked him whether he was soon going to leave New York for good and he said no, which made my heart sink all the way into my shoes. Why had I told him those half-lies? He would find out soon enough. "But perhaps he might die and then my secret would die with him," I thought, and, while looking at him for traces of old age or failing health, a feeling of deep shame, which soon became a feeling of real sorrow, made me think of his son and act at once as his son's representative. I grabbed his arm and, in an impulse of extremely respectful familiarity, I said to him: "Forgive me for asking you to sit here, I should have been more thoughtful: these benches are not good for your health."

"You are quite right," he said. "I had not thought of it, and you are very kind to think of my health."

"Oh, that is nothing," I said.

"If my son were here," said he, "he would be very grateful to you for thinking of his father's health."

Now I knew we were friends, and I wished I had told him the truth. But alas, it was impossible. I had thus barred myself the only avenue of escape from inactivity. Here, a French scholar and a friend, who was my next-seat neighbor in the library, and whose advice and encouragement might have helped me finish my work, was a person to be avoided now, because the story he knew of me was not exactly my own story, or rather, yes, it was, but without all the sadness of my personal torments: it was the story of a man to be envied, not helped.

He went on wondering why he had never heard of me or

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read my books. He had read everything, nothing had seemed to escape him in the field of history, he was beginning to be worried, lest he had gone gaga, and he apologized. "I feel I should know what you have written, really, I should. It is most unforgivable."

"Too kind of you," I said, and tossed in a well-aimed remark as to the sad condition of us scholars in a world all gone mad.

"How true," he said, "how very true. But you, with such a record, for which indeed I envy you, should not allow these thoughts to sadden you. You have done something at least. I have done nothing. I am beginning now, and with no great ambitions except to pick up a few crumbs of culture from the rich tables of people like yourself."

I bowed again, then shook my head in sadness. "You are mistaken," said I, "if you consider me a man of culture. And what is culture anyway? Today, with the atom bomb?"

I was so right. He nodded, and I kept wondering whether anything on earth could kill us both right now. Or give him such a shock that he would lose the memory of the last twenty minutes.

Then I had an inspiration. I asked him whether he knew a certain publisher in Paris, who had been begging me to finish my economic history of the pre-revolutionary years. Yes, he knew him. "Well," I said, "if he were here he would tell you that I am too much of a pessimist, have little faith in my own work, and . . . (that is *his* opinion) that I never finish my books."

"He is probably right. You do seem a great pessimist, even to me, who am not altogether a great optimist, you know . . ."

"Well, let's not talk about it. Here, with the rush of daily existence, the demands of this vulgar, commercialized age of ours . . ."

"Why don't you leave New York?" he asked. "Why don't you teach?"

"Teach? I know nothing. Then, you know . . . the small college town, with people looking at you as you walk by, and with those elm trees that look like dripping spinach and cast such a nocturnal green on your dark porch . . ."

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"That is not necessarily so. Find a college without elm trees."

"And without streets? And people knowing all about you?"

"But New York is far worse."

"How about you?"

"But I am not such a pessimist. New York affects me little. In fact, I like New York."

"So do I." It was good to tell the truth. I was afraid of any coming lies now, so I asked him to wait and ran downstairs to pick up from my briefcase an old copy of my first book, the last one I possessed, and picked up also a copy (the only one) of my longest and best beginning, which is the seventh. In the process of finding these two things, my interest in my book was suddenly revived to such a point, that I almost forgot Monsieur Goiran and sat down to write the whole book at once, in one of those rare fits of inspiration so similar to that of my first book, that I felt it as a real crime to tear myself away from there, simply because an old gentleman was waiting for me upstairs. I hesitated for a brief moment, considering the effect of my great impoliteness, and the price of politeness, and the necessity of explaining everything tomorrow, after placating him (a new hope for his instant loss of memory flashed through my mind), but then, while all these thoughts made me decide to run upstairs and do my work in longhand there, I thought of all my reference books, and of my typewriter, and my notes and the fact that it was so much more convenient to work here than upstairs, and again I hesitated, I closed my eyes to choose not from ideas but from real images, and I pictured myself seated in front of my typewriter and working very hard.

Luba interrupted me. She and Aga Oglu wanted to celebrate another article Aga had almost finished writing in an hour, and I was furious. "Don't interrupt me, please," I said. She left, I closed my eyes again but could not conjure the image of myself at work again, so everything was lost. Besides, by now the hurry was back in me, and the poor gentleman was waiting for me, so I rushed up and he was gone. I found him at 550, writing with my pencil. This consoled me at once, it made me feel that the link was not broken. He could not be

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too angry if he could use my pencil. I ran to him as if that were a signal meant to be seen by him the moment I came in, so as to allay my anguish, which, as a sensitive person, he must have known was great. "Forgive me and thank you," I said to him so as to reassure him that the signal was seen. "I am so glad to see that you are using . . . a *longer pencil*." (I said "a longer pencil" instead of saying "my pencil," to avoid the unkind implication that I knew I had done him a favor. It was a clever formula also because it put the stress on his best interest only. I stayed out of the picture except as an observer, interested in his good health. Which tied in beautifully with my previous remark about sitting on the cold bench.) He seemed surprised, as if totally insensitive to these nuances. Which, coming from a French ambassador, hurt me a bit, but not too much. I forget grudges easily. "Here is *one* of the books," I said, putting my first book under his nose. "The others will come later. And here is something I would like you to read: the beginning of a chapter on the eve of the French Revolution seen from the point of view of economics and finance. A subject with which I have been toying in the last year or so. This will become a book." He thanked me and said, "Un peu plus bas," that is, "not so loud," and I sat down with a feeling of anger, wishing now for his death without any reserve. "Un peu plus bas" my foot! Who the hell was he to tell me how to speak in a library? Were I to tell *him* how to seat kings or declare wars, how would he like that?

I took up my last pencil and began to write *Chapter One* on top of the page, then decided that I better write *Introduction*, then I cancelled that and wrote *Preface*, and having done that much I laid the pencil down and looked at him, while he was reading my typewritten pages. The book was under his right hand and he was playing with its pages, almost earmarking them, which annoyed me a great deal. Finally, before ending page one he looked briefly at page two, then at page three, of which he read only a few words (and page three was the climax of it all; it was there in fact that the central idea was first expressed in brilliant words), then he looked at page four, counted how many more there were: sixteen in all, and, with-

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out reading them, he said: "Is this the book you mentioned before?"

"Which one? I mentioned several."

"One of those you never finished?"

"Oh, oh . . . I see. No, no, of course not. I finished one on this same subject years ago. This is the whole problem once more, seen from a different angle. Better, I dare say. What do you think of it?"

"The idea is good. Now you must write it."

I found nothing to answer. "And . . . the book?"

"Oh, the book. Well, I have seen it. Good."

"You haven't seen it yet."

"I knew it. I had seen it years ago, and I recall the impression it made on me then. A promising young book, not without certain rough edges, but promising, as I say. Well, young man, good luck to you. Write one thing at a time and finish it. As a much older man than you, may I be bold enough to offer my advice for what it is worth: not much, I know. But you were kind enough to warn me not to sit on cold benches or in air currents, so may I warn you not to sit on cold ideas. Air currents are less dangerous than thought currents. Closet yourself with one thing at a time and work on that until you have it out. Good luck." He shook my hand, told me not to get up for him, pocketed all his pencil stumps, then picked one of my pencils from the table as if it were something to eat, showed it to me and said, "This one, with your permission, I shall take."

"They are all yours," I said.

"No, no, thank you. One will last me a long time. We French are parsimonious, as you know."

Yes. I knew I had hurt him, this was the lesson, the last of a whole series left at my door. He turned around before leaving the room and bowed in my direction through a mass of green lamps, brown tables, chairs and readers.

I tore the sheet with the words *Chapter One*, *Introduction* and *Preface*, and wrote on the next sheet in large characters: SERVES ME RIGHT. And looked at it for a long time, to learn the lesson.

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But I no longer cared. I had become indifferent. It was two–thirty. And it was springtime, too, a late, late spring, which kept assaying the quality of our bones, before letting us come into its green arms. Cold in the morning, hot in the afternoon; hot in the morning, cold in the afternoon, a most neurotic weather. Now there was sunshine: dustshine, rather. All the dust from old books came running to the beam of pink light that came in one piece from the window, and broke into patches and shadows on heads and shoulders, noses and chins, white shirtsleeves, pencils, books, tables and chairs. A girl passed by carrying a big load of books right on her stomach. The easiest way to carry books, a way dictated by maternal instincts. She walked lazily and sadly. I could not see her face, she was walking away from where I sat. Not with child but with book. I closed my eyes. How easy it is for women not to think of themselves only. They make the others out of their own flesh, and egotism, all by itself, becomes love of the other. They don't have to learn anything, to read books or think hard. Knowledge comes to them like a child. It *is* their child. A bird was marking distances between the tops of buildings. Heavy afternoon and heavy books and heavy walk of girls with book. Pages were being turned in sundust, penpoints scratched and schoolboys giggled in a corner. Building wreckers downtown, fire engines on Madison, steamships, white, proud and fat, with green water up to their chests, like dirty pigeons ready to drop clay on human shoulders (why always on shoulders?), noises of books dropped on tables, whisper of information, arms erect down there in a fight against sleep, and yawning overheard from five seats back.

More buildings wrecked, a bassoon from the ships. Another bird. More dust, more pink sunshine, and a hand on my shoulder. "You cannot sleep here," says the uniformed guard whom I have known for years.

"I was not sleeping," I said. "I was separating one thought from the next."

"You were sleeping, I saw you."

"So what? He who knows how to sleep knows how to read. Sleep is a paragraph."

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"Do you want to be kicked out of here?" he asked. "You don't even have books to read. This is a place for readers, not for people who want to take a nap. Unless you order books you cannot sit here, understand?"

I was out of my wits. Everybody was looking at me. I looked for Mrs. Vitali, she was not there. The man in charge was not a friend (he is now dead, peace to his soul, poor Mr. Mitcher), and he was glad to have a chance to reprimand a reader. He disapproved of readers anyway, he thought readers had no right to be served with daydreaming on trays, and to see them daysnore was more than he could stand. So he told me that the attendant was right and I better see to it that I obey the rules or else. I was so angry that I left him in midphrase and ran to order all the heaviest books I could think of for my seat, then rushed out to the corridor to eat my carrot, which I had carried with me from home, wrapped in oilpaper.

But between the rage and the carrot, I bit my cheek where I had bitten it before three times already, and this at once gave me the fear of cancer. So I ran to the telephone and called my doctor, to tell him what had happened. He was busy and not too kind, which made me furious. I asked him whether I could come right away, he said no, not before Saturday, which left me for a dangerous period of three days entirely at the mercy of God knows what bad agents might well finish me. Back in the reading room, I found a note on the same sheet of paper on which I had written SERVES ME RIGHT. It was from Edith Porada who had come to say goodbye.

Edith Porada is a great scholar, a most extraordinary creature, with the sadness of knowledge in her eyes, but also at the same time the serenity of knowledge. She is now working at the Morgan Library, and she was working then in the Near East Division, on Assyrian Glottology. If Edith finished a book (which she usually does), I not only have no hard feelings against her, but I am happy. The only thing that makes me feel uneasy in her presence was that she thought I had done her a favor years ago when, by mere accident, I introduced her father (whom I have never seen) to someone who gave him a good job. He was a refugee from Europe, and an old gentle-

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man at that, so this was lucky for him. Of course I could never reveal to Edith that I had difficulties with my own work because this might have pained her (so I believed, I don't know why), and I wanted to spare her any unpleasant feelings. Now she had seen those words on my notes, and this was quite disturbing for me.

I ran downstairs and found her in the corridor. "Those words you read there," I said to her at once, "stand for the fact that I have been disturbed all afternoon by people who wanted me to help them. First a man who had to write a letter to his boss asking for a raise and did not know how to write it, so I had to write it for him and he did not even thank me. Then a French gentleman, who turned out to be an old acquaintance of mine, needed new pencils, so I gave him new pencils, and this led to a long conversation that made me waste more time. This has been a bad day, all in all. Add to this that I am not feeling well, so I am angry with myself for wasting my time stupidly, and that is why I wrote those words."

"What words?" she asked. She had not read them.

"How could you fail to see them? They were written in large characters."

"I try not to be indiscreet," she said.

And *that* served me right, too. What would she think of me? Would she believe my story? Would she not rather think that I was a time-waster anyway and always tried to find faults with the others, as I certainly did? "You know," I said, "on second thought, I have no right to say that others are responsible if I waste time. It is my fault and my fault only. That is a fact."

"You are too strict with yourself and too generous with others," said she with her sad smile, and I felt once more the target of a well-deserved lesson. Which gave me a feeling of real physical discomfort, and a great, sudden headache.

"I am leaving," she said. "I am going to work at the Morgan Library from now on, and I had come to say goodbye. How is your book?"

"Oh, practically finished," I said. "Just editing."

"Don't overdo that," she said. "It is always a mistake."

How right she was again, another lesson. Always lessons

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from everyone, and I could offer nothing to them in return. What a perfectly useless person I was.

I went back to the reading room, sat down because that evil man in uniform was watching me. I could have returned the books, after all that was my business, I did not have to prove anything to anybody, especially to him, but something made me act as if I were engrossed in reading, while those were magazines, old, illustrated weeklies of fifty years ago, out of which I could get nothing. But I was sorry for those magazines, too. They had been waiting for me, I must acknowledge their existence or they would feel as sad and lonely as I too often felt.

Besides, I could leave them right there, no one would touch them until ten o'clock at night when the library closed, if I just put a slip on them with the words DO NOT REMOVE. I did it, proudly. It was good to know that no one would use seat 552 in my absence. It was in fact the only satisfaction of that long, trying day. Now I deserved a little sunshine, and a cup of hot chocolate, if not a hearty lunch. It was three–ten. I ran downstairs, made sure no one had touched my typewriter, and there was Aga Oglu again, back from his interruption, and loaded with ideas, hoping to finish his second article before the night. I hated him for that, but I also felt a sudden urge to tell him, as a friend, why I hated myself.

"I must confess to you," I said, "that I hate you, and I apologize. You can finish your work, I never do, I cannot even begin it any more. I am a wreck, a total failure. That damned book on the French Revolution, for example. When shall I finish it?"

"Oh," he said, lifting his arms to the ceiling. "Why should anyone want to write books? What good are they?"

"Well, you are writing them."

"Because I must."

"And how about myself? I am not a rich man."

"Who knows?"

"I do. And I resent that. I should finish that book in three months at the latest."

"Don't set yourself such goals. If it isn't three months it will be three years."

"Oh no. Hell no. Three years indeed!"

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"Well, my friend, if you had had that steak I was eager to offer you today, you would be seeing things in a much better light now. Eat something, have a sandwich, may I offer it to you?"

"No thanks." I left him in a rage. Offer me a sandwich after I had refused filet mignon. How tactless of him. And how stupid of me. Here was another lesson for me to learn. Nothing but lessons all the time. I ran outside the building, determined to walk past all bums or empty benches without any regard for any signs of the fates or whoever it was that issued warnings all the time. What made me stop right in front of the building, on the first platform back of the uptown lion was no sign from the fates, but something very, very sad. A blade of grass. One blade, just one, tender and lonely and about to be crushed by reckless shoes, anyone's shoes. It was thirsty for sunshine and unaware of being born in the wrong place. Poor blade of grass. And nothing could be done to save it. Nothing at all. If I picked it to rescue it, that would mean death. If I dug it with its own bit of dirt, and replanted it elsewhere, I might be arrested by a guard, or laughed at by passers-by, or disgusted at myself for showing such idiotic feelings. A blade of grass. To hell with it. How about us, the human race, all alone in this world? And how about the world itself, alone in space? A dark feeling of anguish accompanied the memory of my old cosmological complex as it surged to the surface of my conscience from the depths of my childhood recollections. Luckily for me, the sky was not blue. It was grey, dirty and grey, an assemblage of cloudgarbage swept together by the dirtiest winds of New Jersey. Here, a breath of those winds came down especially to torment that poor lonely blade of grass. It shivered in the wind. It shivered, all by itself, it touched the pavement, testing it, allaying it, the foreign body, the inimical substance on which no grass would grow. That blade touching the stone and touching it and touching it again brought such sobs to my throat that I fled, crying, in the direction of nowhere uptown.

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New Translations from the Work of Rainer Maria Rilke

Little Tear-Vase

Other vessels hold wine, other vessels hold oil
inside the hollowed-out vault circumscribed by their clay.
I, as a smaller measure, and as the slimmest of all,
humbly hollow myself so that just a few tears can fill me.

Wine becomes richer, oil becomes clear, in its vessel.
What happens with tears?—They made me blind in my glass,
made me heavy and made my curve iridescent,
made me brittle, and left me empty at last.

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The Lion Cage

She paces back and forth like the sentinels out at the edge of the fortifications, where there is nothing left. And as in the sentinels, there is homesickness in her, heavy homesickness in fragments.

As somewhere down in the ocean there must be mirrors, mirrors from the cabins of sunken ships, fragments of mirrors, which of course no longer contain anything: not the faces of the travelers, not one of their gestures; not the way they turned and looked so strangely awkward from the back; not the wall, not the corner where they slept; still less what swayingly shone in from there and outside; nothing, no. But as nevertheless a piece of seaweed perhaps, an open, sinking polyp, the sudden face of a fish, or even just the water itself, floating, parted, coming together again, evokes resemblances in those mirrors, distant, oblique, false, soon-abandoned resemblances with what once existed—:

thus memories, fragments of memories, lie, broken-edged, in the dark at the bottom of her blood.

She paces back and forth around him, the lion, who is sick. Being sick doesn't concern him and doesn't diminish him; it just hems him in. The way he lies, his soft bent paws intentionless, his proud face heaped with a worn-out mane, his eyes no longer loaded, he is erected upon himself as a monument to his own sadness, just as he once (always beyond himself) was the exaggeration of his strength.

Now it still twitches here and there in his muscles, it tenses, here and there small spots of anger are forming, too distant from one another; the blood bursts angrily, with a leap, from the chambers of his heart, and certainly it still has its carefully tested turns of sudden decision when it rushes into the brain.

But he just lets things happen, because the end hasn't yet come, and he no longer exerts any energy and no longer takes part. Only far off, as though held away from himself, he paints with the soft paintbrush of his tail, again and again, a small, semicircular gesture of indescribable disdain. And this takes

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place so significantly that the lioness stops and looks over: troubled, aroused, expectant.

But then she begins her pacing again, the desperate, ridiculous pacing of the sentinel, which falls back into the same tracks, again and again. She paces and paces, and sometimes her distracted mask appears, round and full, crossed out by the bars.

She moves the way clocks move. And on her face, as on a clock dial which someone shines a light onto at night, a strange, briefly-shown hour stands: a terrifying hour, in which someone dies.

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An Experience

It could have been little more than a year ago that, in the castle garden which sloped down quite steeply to the sea, something strange happened to him. Walking back and forth with a book, as was his custom, he had happened to recline into the more or less shoulder-high fork of a shrublike tree, and in this position he immediately felt himself so pleasurably supported and so deeply soothed that he remained as he was, without reading, completely absorbed into Nature, in a nearly unconscious contemplation. Little by little his attention awakened to a feeling he had never known before: it was as if almost unnoticeable pulsations were passing into him from the inside of the tree; he explained this to himself quite easily by supposing that an otherwise invisible wind, perhaps blowing down the slope close to the ground, was making itself felt in the wood, though he had to acknowledge that the trunk seemed too thick to be moved so forcibly by such a mild breeze. What concerned him, however, was not to pass any kind of judgment; rather, he was more and more surprised, indeed astonished, by the effect of this pulsation which kept ceaselessly passing over into him; it seemed to him that he had never been filled by more delicate movements; his body was being treated, so to speak, like a soul, and made capable of absorbing a degree of influence which, in the usual distinctness of physical conditions, wouldn't really have been sensed at all. Nor could he correctly determine, during the first few moments, which of his senses it was through which he was receiving so delicate and extended a communication; moreover, the condition it had created in him was so perfect and continuous, different from all others, but so impossible to describe by the intensification of anything experienced before, that for all its exquisiteness he couldn't think of calling it a pleasure. Nevertheless, concerned as he always was to account for precisely the subtlest impressions, he asked himself insistently what was happening to him, and almost immediately found an expression that satisfied him as he said it aloud: he had passed over to the other side of Nature. As happens

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sometimes in a dream, this phrase now gave him joy, and he considered it almost completely apt. Everywhere and more and more regularly filled with this impulse which kept recurring in strangely interior intervals, his body became indescribably touching to him and of no further use than to be purely and cautiously present in, just as a ghost, already dwelling elsewhere, sadly enters what was tenderly laid aside, in order to belong once again, even if inattentively, to this once so indispensable world. Slowly looking around himself, without otherwise shifting his position, he recognized everything, remembered it, smiled at it with a kind of distant affection, let it be, as if it were something which had once, in circumstances long since vanished, taken part in his life. A bird flew through his gaze, a shadow engrossed him, the very path, the way it continued and was lost, filled him with a contemplative insight, which seemed to him all the more pure in that he knew he was independent of it. *Where* his usual dwelling place was he couldn't have conceived, but that he was only *returning* to all this here, that he was standing in this body as if in the recess of an abandoned window, looking out: —of this he was for a few seconds so thoroughly convinced that the sudden apparition of one of his friends from the house would have shocked him in the most excruciating way; whereas he truly, deep inside himself, was prepared to see Polyxène or Raimondine or some other long-dead inhabitant of the house step forth from the path's turn. He understood the quiet superabundance of these Things; he was allowed, intimately, to see these ephemeral earthly forms used in such an absolute way that their harmony drove out of him everything else he had learned; he was sure that if he were to move in their midst he wouldn't seem strange to them. A periwinkle that stood near him, and whose blue gaze he had already met a number of times, touched him now from a more spiritual distance, but with so inexhaustible a meaning that it seemed as if there were nothing more that could be concealed. Altogether, he was able to observe how all objects yielded themselves to him more distantly and, at the same time, somehow more truly; this might have been due to his own vision, which was no longer

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directed forward and diluted in empty space; he was looking, as if over his shoulder, *backward* at Things, and their now completed existence took on a bold, sweet aftertaste, as though everything had been spiced with a trace of the blossom of parting.—Saying to himself from time to time that this couldn't last, he nevertheless wasn't afraid that the extraordinary condition would suddenly break off, as if he could only expect from it, as from music, a conclusion that would be in infinite conformity to its own law.

All at once his position began to be uncomfortable, he could feel the trunk, the fatigue of the book in his hand, and emerged. An obvious wind was blowing now in the leaves, it came from the sea, the bushes up the slope were tossing together.

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The Young Workman's Letter

At a meeting last Thursday, some of your poems were read to us, Monsieur V.; they keep returning to me; I can't help writing down for you what is on my mind, as well as I can.

The day after that reading, I happened to attend, by chance, an event sponsored by a Christian group, and maybe this was really the impetus which caused the explosion, which unleashed such commotion and urgency that I find myself rushing toward you with all my might. It takes an enormous act of violence to begin something. I can't *begin*. I simply jump over what should be the beginning. Nothing is as strong as silence. It would never have been broken, if we hadn't each been born into the midst of talk.

Monsieur V.—I don't want to speak about the evening when we received your poetry. I want to speak about the other evening. Something is forcing me to say: Who, yes (I can't express it any other way now) *who* is this Christ who meddles with everything we do;—who has never known a thing about us, or about our work, or about our griefs, or about our joys, as we achieve them today, live them, and bring them forth—, and who nevertheless, it seems, constantly demands to be the *first* in our life? Or has that just been put into his mouth? What does he want of us? He wants to help us, supposedly. Yes, but he seems so strangely bewildered when he's near us. His situation was so completely different. Or don't the circumstances really matter; if he entered right here, into my room, or appeared over at the factory—everything would immediately be different, right? Would my heart burst open inside me and, so to speak, continue in some other realm and always in his direction? My instinct tells me that he isn't *able* to come. That it would have no sense. Our world isn't just outwardly different,—it has no access for him. He wouldn't *shine* through a department-store coat, it isn't true, he just wouldn't shine through. It's no accident that he went around in a seamless robe, and I think the kernel of light in him, the thing that made him shine so strongly, day and night, is long since dissolved, and distributed somewhere else. But if he was so great,

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this would, it seems to me, be the least we could demand of him—that somehow he should have vanished without any residue, yes, without any residue at all—traceless.

I can't imagine that the *cross* should have *remained*, which was, after all, just a crossroads. It shouldn't be burned onto us, all over our flesh, like a brand. It should have been dissolved in Christ himself. For isn't the truth *this*: he simply wanted to create the higher tree on which we would be better able to ripen. He, on the cross, is this new tree in God, and we were supposed to be the warm, happy fruit at the top of it.

Now we shouldn't always talk of what was *before*: the *after* should already have begun. This tree, I feel, should have become so one with us, or we with it, *on* it, that we wouldn't have to be continually concerned with it but, simply and peacefully, with God, since Christ's purpose was, after all, to more purely hold us up into God.

When I say: God, this is a great conviction in me, and not something I have been taught. The whole creation, it seems to me, says this word, without thinking, though often out of a deep meditativeness. If this Christ has helped us to say it with a clearer voice, more fully, more genuinely—so much the better; but leave him out of the question. Don't force us to always fall back into the trouble and affliction that it cost him to, as you say, "redeem" us. Let us finally enter into this redemption.—Otherwise the Old Testament is a much better resource, it is full of fingers pointing to God, wherever you open it, and whenever someone becomes heavy there, he always falls right into God's center. And once I tried to read the Koran, I didn't get very far, but I understood this much, that in it too there is a powerful finger, and God stands at the end of the path it is pointing to, grasped in his eternal rising, in an East that will never end. Christ surely wanted the same thing. To point. But the people here have been like dogs, who don't understand pointing fingers and think they are supposed to snap at the hand. Instead of taking the crossroads, where the signpost was raised high into the night of sacrifice, instead of taking this crossroads as a point of departure, Christianity has settled there, and claims that it is living there in

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Christ, although there was no room in him, not even for his mother, and not for Mary Magdalene: as in every guide, who is a gesture and not a dwelling-place.—And that's why they aren't living in Christ, these stubborn-hearted people, who keep bringing him back again and live from the raising of a tilted or fully blown-down cross. They have this mob on their conscience, this standing around on the overcrowded place, it's their fault that the journey doesn't continue in the direction the cross's arms point to. Out of what is Christian they have made a career, a bourgeois occupation, an alternately drained and refilled pool. Everything that they do themselves, according to their unsuppressible nature (insofar as they are still alive), is a contradiction of this remarkable tendency, and thus they muddy their own waters and have to renew them again and again. In their zeal they keep making the earthly, which ought to be a source of joy and trust, evil and worthless,—and thus, more and more, they hand over the earth to those who are ready—failed and suspect as it is, and undeserving of anything better—to wrest a temporary, quickly-won profit from it. This growing exploitation of life, isn't it a result of the centuries-long devaluation of the earthly? What insanity to deflect us toward a Beyond, when right here we are surrounded by tasks and expectations and futures. What a swindle to steal the images of earthly delight and sell them to heaven, behind our backs! The impoverished earth should long ago have called in all those loans that have been drawn on its blessedness so that an afterfuture might be adorned with them. Does death really become more transparent because of these lights that have been dragged into place behind it? And, since no void can continue to exist, won't everything that has been taken away here be replaced by a fraud?—is this why the cities are filled with so much ugly noise and artificial light, because true radiance and song have been handed over to a Jerusalem that can be inhabited only later? Christ may have been right when, in a time filled with decayed and defoliated gods, he spoke unkind words about the earthly, although (I can't help thinking this) it is really an insult to God not to see that what is given to us here is thoroughly capable of making us happy,

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out to the edge of our senses, if only we use it well. *The proper use, that's the important thing.* To take the earthly in our hands, properly, in a truly loving way, with awe, as our temporary and unique treasure: this is also, to use an everyday expression, God's great "instructions for use," it is what Saint Francis of Assisi intended to write in his canticle to the sun, a song that on his deathbed was more glorious to him than the cross, which stood there only *to point* into the sun. But what people call the Church had in the meantime already swollen to such a chaos of voices that the hymn of the dying man, drowned out on every side, was only noticed by a few simple monks and infinitely assented to by the landscape of his graceful valley. How often must such attempts have been made, to bring about a reconciliation between the Christian refusal and the obvious friendship and cheerfulness of the earth. But in other ways too, within the Church, even in its own crown, the earthly gained its fullness and its innate profusion. Why don't people praise the Church for being vigorous enough not to crumble beneath the life-weight of certain popes, whose throne was loaded with bastard children, courtesans, and corpses. Wasn't there more Christianity in them than in the dry restorers of the Gospels—that is to say, a living, irrepressible, transformed Christianity. I mean, we don't really know *what* will come out of the great teachings, we just have to let them flow forth and go their own way and not be frightened when they suddenly burst into the fissured channels of life, and roll, deep under the earth, in imperceptible beds.

I once worked for a couple of months in Marseilles. It was a special time for me, I owe a lot to it. Chance brought me in touch with a young painter, who remained my friend till his death. He had lung disease and had just come back from Tunis. We spent a lot of time together and, because the end of my job coincided with his return to Paris, we were able to arrange a few days in Avignon. They were unforgettable. Partly because of the town itself, its buildings and the area around it, and also because my friend, during these days of uninterrupted and, somehow, heightened intimacy, opened up to me about many matters, especially about his *inner* life, with an

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eloquence that seems to be at times characteristic of people suffering from that disease. Everything he said had a strange prophetic power; through everything that burst out in often almost breathless talks, one saw, as it were, the bottom of the river, the stones on the bottom . . . I mean by that, more than something that is just ours: Nature itself, its oldest and hardest essence, which we nevertheless touch at so many places and which we probably depend upon at our most urgent moments, since its downward slope determines our inclination. In addition, there was an unexpected and happy love affair, his heart was in an uncommon state of exaltation, for days on end, and thus the sparkling fountain of his life shot up to a considerable height. To view an extraordinary town and a more than pleasing landscape in the company of someone who finds himself in such a situation is a rare privilege; and that is why those tender and at the same time passionate spring days seem to me, when I think back, the only holidays that I have ever known. The time was so ridiculously short, for anyone else it would barely have been enough to gather a few impressions,—to me, unaccustomed as I am to spending free days, it seemed vast. Actually, it seems almost wrong to call it *time*, since it was rather a new condition of freedom, quite feelably a *space*, a being-surrounded by the Open, not a passing. I caught up with childhood then, if one may put it that way, and with a part of early youth, all of which I had never had time to achieve in myself; I looked, I learned, I understood—, and these days also gave rise to the discovery that saying "God" is so easy, so genuine, so—as my friend would have expressed it—so unproblematically simple. How could this house, which the popes erected for themselves there, not have seemed to me powerful? I had the impression that it couldn't contain any inner space at all, that it must be built, through and through, out of solid blocks, as if the exiles' only purpose was to pile up the weight of the papacy with such abundance that it would tip history's scales. And in reality this ecclesiastical palace towers up over an antique torso of a Heracles, which was walled into the rocky foundations—"hasn't it," said Pierre, "grown up colossally as if out of this seed?"—That

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this is Christianity, in one of its transformations, would be much more understandable to me than to recognize its strength and its taste in the constantly weaker infusion of that herb tea which people say was prepared from its first, tenderest leaves.

But even the cathedrals aren't the bodies of that spirit which we are now supposed to believe is the authentically Christian one. I could imagine that beneath some of them the fallen statue of a Greek goddess is resting; so much blossoming, so much reality sprang up in them, even if, as in a fear that arose during their time, they struggled away from that hidden body up into the heavens, which the sound of their huge bells was appointed to keep continually open.

After my return from Avignon I went to church quite often, in the evening and on Sunday,—at first alone . . . and later . . .

I am in love with a woman, hardly older than a child, who works at home, so that she is often in a bad situation when there isn't much work. She is skilled, it would be easy for her to find a job in a factory, but she's afraid of the boss. Her idea of freedom is boundless. It won't surprise you that she perceives God too as a kind of boss, actually as the "head boss," as she said to me, laughing, but with such terror in her eyes. It was a long time before she decided to accompany me one evening to St. Eustache, where I liked to go because of the music of the May services. Once we went together as far as Maux and looked at the tombstones in the church there. Gradually she noticed that God leaves you alone in the churches, that he demands nothing; you might think that he wasn't there at all,—and yet, Marthe thought, the moment you're about to say that he isn't in the church, something holds you back. Perhaps only what people themselves have for so many centuries brought into this high, oddly strengthened air. And perhaps it is only that the vibration of the powerful and sweet music can never completely get outside, it must have long since penetrated into the stones, and they must be remarkably affected stones, these pillars and vaults, and even though a stone is hard and almost inaccessible, in the end it is deeply moved by continual singing and these assaults from the organ,

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these onslaughts, these storms of song, every Sunday, these hurricanes of the great holidays. A lull. That's what, strictly speaking, reigns in the old churches. I said it to Marthe. A lull. We listened, she understood it immediately, she has a wonderfully prepared sensibility. After that, we sometimes entered when we heard singing, and stood there, close to each other. It was the most beautiful when we had a stained-glass window in front of us, one of those old picture windows, with many partitions, each one completely filled with shapes, huge people and small towers and all kinds of events. Nothing was too strange for them, you see castles and battles and a hunt, and the beautiful white stag appears again and again in the hot red and in the burning blue. I was once given a very old wine to drink. That's what it's like for your eyes, this window, only that the wine was just dark red in my mouth,—but this is the same in blue also and in violet and in green. There is really *everything* in the old churches, no shrinking from anything, as there is in the newer ones, where only the "good" examples appear. Here you see also what is bad and evil and horrible; what is deformed and suffering, what is ugly, what is unjust—and you could say that all this is somehow loved for God's sake. Here is the angel, who doesn't exist, and the devil, who doesn't exist; and the human being, who does exist, stands between them, and (I can't help saying it) their unreality makes him more real to me. What I feel when I hear the expression "a human being," I can figure it out better in there than on the street among people who have absolutely nothing recognizable about them. But that is hard to say. And what I want to say now is even harder to express. Which is that in regard to the boss, the power (this too became clear to me in there, very slowly, when we stood completely in the music), there is just *one* way of struggling against it: to go further than it does itself. What I mean is this: we should strive to see in every power that claims a right over us: all power, the whole of power, power universally, the power of God. We should say to ourselves, there is just *one*, and understand the weak, the false, the defective kind as if it were the kind that rightfully grips us. Wouldn't it become harmless in this way? If in every power,

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even in the evil and malignant, we always saw power itself, I mean that which ultimately has the right to be powerful, wouldn't we then overcome, intact so to speak, even the unrightful and arbitrary? Isn't this exactly how we stand in relation to all the unknown great forces? We don't experience any of them in their purity. We accept each with its faults, which perhaps are adapted to our own faults.—But with all scholars, discoverers, inventors, hasn't the awareness that they are dealing with great forces led them suddenly to the greatest? I am young, and there is a lot of protest in me; I can't give any assurance that I act wisely every time impatience and disgust get the better of me,—but in my depths I know that submission leads further than rebellion; it shames that which is usurpation, and it contributes indescribably to the glorification of the rightful power. The rebel pulls himself out from the attraction of one center of power, and he may perhaps succeed in escaping from its field; but beyond it he finds himself in the void and has to look around for another gravitational force to draw him in. And this one is generally even less legitimate than the first. Why not then see in the power we live in, the greatest power of all, unperturbed by its weaknesses and fluctuations? Somewhere the arbitrary will of itself collide against the law, and we save energy if we leave it to convert itself. Of course, that is one of those long and slow processes which are in such complete contradiction with the strange upheavals of our time. But alongside the quickest movements there will always be slow ones, even ones that are of such extreme slowness that we can't in the least perceive their advance. But humanity is there, isn't it, to wait for what stretches out beyond the individual.—From its point of view, the slowest is often the quickest, that is to say, it turns out that we called it slow only because it was something unmeasurable.

Now there is, it seems to me, something absolutely immeasurable, which humans are never tired of misappropriating with their criteria, measurements, and institutions. And here, in the love which, with an unbearable mixture of contempt, desire, and curiosity, they call "sensual love," here we find the worst consequences of that devaluation which Christianity felt obliged to assign to the earthly. Here everything is distortion

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and repression, even though we come forth from this deepest of events and ourselves possess again in it the center of our delights. I find it, if I may say so, more and more incomprehensible that a doctrine which puts us in the wrong *there*, where all creation enjoys its most blissful right—that such a doctrine is able, if not anywhere to establish itself as true, nevertheless to hold its ground so permanently over such a wide area.

I think, here again, of the animated conversations I had with my deceased friend, that time, in the meadows of the Barthelasse Island in the spring and later. Even the night before his death (he died the following afternoon a little after five o'clock), he opened for me such pure vistas into a realm of the blindest suffering that my life seemed to begin anew in a thousand places, and when I tried to answer, I had no control over my voice. I didn't know that there are tears of joy. I cried my first ones, like a beginner, into the hands of this young man who in a few hours would be dead, and felt how the tide of life in Pierre was once again rising and overflowing, as these hot tear-drops were added to it. Am I being excessive? I'm speaking of a *too-much*.

Why, I ask you, Monsieur V., when people want to help us, we who are so often helpless, why do they leave us in the lurch, there at the root of all experience? Anyone who would stand by us *there* could be confident that we would want nothing further of him. For the help he gave us would grow by itself with our life and would become greater and stronger together with it. And would never end. Why aren't we placed into our most mysterious part? Why must we sneak around it, and finally enter into like burglars and thieves, into our own beautiful sex, where we get lost and bang into things and stumble, and finally, like criminals caught in the act, rush out again into the twilight of Christianity. Why, even if, because of the inner tension of the soul, guilt or sin had to be invented, why didn't they fasten it to some other part of our body, why did they let it fall there, and wait till, as it dissolved, it poisoned and muddied our pure source? Why have they made our sex homeless, instead of transferring there the festival of our competence?

All right, I'll admit that it shouldn't belong to us, we who

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are incapable of assuming and administering such inexhaustible bliss. But why don't we belong to God starting from *this* place?

A priest would point out to me that there is marriage, although he would not be unaware of the state this institution is in. Nor does it help to move the will-to-propagation into the sunlight of grace—, my sex is not just turned toward the future, it is the mystery of my own life—, and it's only because, as it seems, it may not occupy the central place there that so many people have pushed it out to their edge and thereby lost their equilibrium. What good is all this? The terrible untruth and uncertainty of our time has its foundation in our not acknowledging the happiness of sex, in this strangely mistaken guiltiness, which continually increases, and cuts us off from all the rest of Nature, even from the child, although, as I learned during that unforgettable night, his, the child's, innocence doesn't at all consist in the fact that he, so to speak, doesn't know sex, —"on the contrary," said Pierre almost voicelessly, "that inconceivable happiness which, for us, awakens in *one* place deep within the fruitflesh of a closed embrace is still namelessly scattered everywhere in his whole body." To describe the peculiar situation of our sensuality, we would have to say: Once we were children *everywhere*, now we are children just in one place.—But if there were only one single person among us for whom this was certain and who was capable of showing the proof for it, why do we let it happen that one generation after the other wakes up under the rubble of Christian prejudices and moves in a trance through the darkness, in such a narrow space between mere refusals!?

Monsieur V.: I write and write. A whole night almost has gone by on this. I have to come to an end.—Have I said that I have a job in a factory? I work in the office, sometimes I'm also at a machine. Before, I was once able for a short time to take some courses. Well, I just want to say how I feel. You see, I want to be usable to God just the way I am. What I do here, my work, I want to keep doing it toward him, without having my stream interrupted, if I can express it like that, not even in Christ, who was once the water for many. The machine, for

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example—I can't explain it to him, he doesn't grasp it. I know you won't laugh if I say this so simply, it's the best way. God, though: I have a feeling I can bring it to *him*, my machine and its firstborn, or even my whole work, it enters him without any trouble. Just as it was easy once for the shepherds to bring the gods of their life a lamb or a vegetable-basket or the most beautiful bunch of grapes.

You see, Monsieur V., I've been able to write this long letter without using the word faith even once. For that seems to me a complicated and difficult business, and none of mine. I don't want to let myself be made bad for Christ's sake, but good for God. I don't want to be considered a priori as a sinner, perhaps I'm not. I have such pure mornings! I could talk with God, I don't need anyone to help me compose letters to him.

I know your poems only from that reading the other night, I own just a few books, which mostly have to do with my job. A few of them, it's true, are about art, and history books, just what I could get.—But your poems, you'll have to accept this, have caused this commotion in me. My friend once said, "Give us teachers who praise the earthly for us." You *are* one of these.

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For Veronika Erdmann

That such a mission may become *our* mission,
how much obedience, how much joy.
Between our lines the earth is singing with us
and sweeps us on from noise to melody.

Or is it opposition that must drive
us to create a valid Thing?
Is love: a murderer without a knife?
And is the most endangered species: song?

—translated from the German
by Stephen Mitchell

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Odillo Antoni has been a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant and a James Michener fellowship from the University of Iowa. His stories have appeared in *Telescope, The Missouri Review, Story Quarterly* and also in the anthology *The Editor's Choice Awards 1985*; his nonfiction has been published in *Cahiers Elizabethans, Southern Quarterly* and *The Latin American Literary Review.* He writes of this piece, excerpted from his novel *Divino Trace*: "The diagram which appears on page 178 is a pair of 'dead-eyes' (blocks used in sailboat rigging), a diagram which appears on page 288 of the *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, and which has special meaning in the novel. The musical notes on page 180 are the transcription of an old calypso. Finally, a pommerac is a Caribbean fruit, and the jingle at the end is the one which traditionally ended all West Indian folktales." **Dr. Philip Lutgendorf** is a Professor of Hindi and Asian Literature at the University of Iowa. He has written about oral *Ramayana* performance and Hanuman.
Peter Cameron's story collection, *One Way or Another*, was published in 1986. His stories have appeared in *The New Yorker, Kenyon Review* and *Rolling Stone.* His novel, *Leap Year*, will be published by Harper and Row in 1990.
Allan Gurganus is the author of *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (Knopf, 1989), a main selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. He has twice been a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant and has also won a Wallace Stegner Fellowship. His stories have appeared in *The New Yorker, Harper's* and *The Atlantic.* A collection of his stories, *White People*, will be published in 1990.

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Niccolò Tucci was born in 1908 in Lugano, Switzerland. He is the author of three books in Italian, among them *Il Segreto* (Viareggio Prize) and *Gli Atlantici* (Bagutta Prize), and three in English, including the best-selling *Before My Time*. In the 1930s he emigrated to the U.S. for political reasons. His work has appeared in *The Partisan Review*, *Harpers*, *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*. A collection of his stories, with a preface by Mary McCarthy, will be published by New Directions in 1990. He is working on a sequel to *The Sun and the Moon* (Knopf, 1977).

INTERVIEWS

James R. Baker is a co-founder and editor of *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* and author of *William Golding: A Critical Study*. His essays on modern writers have appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly, Novel: A Forum on Fiction, Journal of Modern Literature* and other magazines.

Robert Phillips is a writer and critic whose most recent book is *Personal Accounts: New and Selected Poems 1966–1986* (Ontario Review Press). He recently edited *The Letters of Delmore Schwartz* and *The Stories of Denton Welch*. He is Special Consultant to *The Paris Review*.

Lloyd Richards is the Dean of the Yale School of Drama and the Artistic Director of the Yale Repertory Theater. Most recently, he directed the Yale Repertory Theater's spring production of Lee Blessing's play "Cobb."

POETRY

Kim Addonizio lives in San Francisco and teaches at San Francisco State University and Vista College. Her work has appeared most recently in *Threepenny Review* and in an anthology, *The Maverick Poets*.

Jack Barrack has just retired from teaching special education in Hartford, Connecticut. His poetry has appeared in *Grand Street, Epoch, The Missouri Review* and other magazines. He was the recipient of the Wesleyan Writers Conference William Meredith Award in 1984 and the Arvon Anthology Award in 1980.

Christopher Benfey teaches at Mount Holyoke College. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The Boston Review*, and other journals. He is working on a study of Stephen Crane.

Robert Bensen's fourth collection of poems, *The Scriptures of Venus*, was published by Swamp Press. He teaches writing and literature at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York.

Stephen Dobyns's most recent poetry collection is *Cemetery Nights* (1986). His most recent novels are *The Two Deaths of Senora Puccini* (1988) and *Saratoga Bestiary* (1988). His next book of poems, *Body Traffic*, will be pub-

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lished by Viking in the fall of 1990. He teaches at Syracuse University and in the MFA Program at Warren Wilson College.

Elaine Equi is the author of four collections of poetry, and the forthcoming *Views Without Room* and *Surface Tension*. She lives in New York City.

Louise Erdrich was born in 1956 and grew up in North Dakota. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband and collaborator, Michael Dorris, and their five children. She is the author of the novels *Love Medicine*, *The Beet Queen*, and *Tracks*, and a poetry collection, *Jacklight*.

J. D. McClatchy is the author of *White Paper: On Contemporary American Poetry* (1988) and editor of *Poets on Painters: Essays on the Art of Painting by Twentieth Century Poets* (1988). He is a Guggenheim Fellow and is presently completing his third book of poems.

Donald Revell's third book of poetry, *New Dark Ages*, is forthcoming in 1990 from Wesleyan University Press. He will be poet-in-residence at the University of Missouri for 1989–1990.

Laurie Sheck's second book of poems, *Io at Night*, will be published by Knopf in 1990. She teaches at Rutgers University.

Charlie Smith is the author of the novels *Shine Hawk* (Paris Review Editions, 1988) and *Canaan* (1984), and the poetry collection *Red Roads* (1987), which was a selection in the National Poetry Series. He won *The Paris Review*'s Aga Khan Fiction Prize in 1983 for his novella "Crystal River."

Alison Stone is at work on a master's degree in writing at New York University. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Statesman*, and other magazines, as well as in two anthologies: *Anthology of Magazine Verse & Yearbook of American Poetry* and *Sweet Nothings: An Anthology of Rock and Roll in American Poetry*.

Marjorie Welish is the author of *Handwritten* (1979) and *Two Poems*, a chapbook (1981). She has written art criticism for *Art in America*, *Connoisseur*, *Partisan Review* and other magazines. She recently completed a poetry manuscript, *The Windows Flew Open*.

FEATURES

Arlen Hansen is chairman of the English Department at The University of The Pacific in Stockton, California. His book *A Tour of Expatriate Paris* will be published in October by Arcade Publishing. His work has been published in *Newsweek* and in various scholarly journals, such as *Modern Fiction Studies*.

Marcel Proust (1871–1922) completed the first draft of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* in 1912. *Swann's Way*, the first of its seven volumes, was published in 1913, but he continued to revise the entire work until he had nearly doubled its length. He died before the last three volumes were published.

Richard Howard's new translation of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, entitled *In Search of Lost Time*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

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He is the author of nine books of poems and has translated over one hundred and fifty books from the French, including works by Charles de Gaulle, Roland Barthes, André Gide, Charles Baudelaire, Claude Simon and Albert Camus. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1970, the National Book Award for his translation of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 1983, and the 1984 PEN Translation Medal.

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), the German poet, was born in Prague. His best-known works include *The Sonnets to Orpheus* and *The Duino Elegies*. The pieces included here were written at diverse points in Rilke's career: the earliest is "The Lion Cage," composed in Paris in 1902; "For Veronika Erdmann" was written in Valmont in 1926, the year of Rilke's death. **Stephen Mitchell's** books include *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teaching of Zen Masters Seung Sahn* (1976), *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke* (1982), *The Book of Job* (1987), *Tao Te Ching* (1988), and *Parables and Portraits* (1990).

ART

Edward Hopper was born in Nyack, New York, in 1882 and died in New York in 1967. One of the most famous American artists, he has had retrospective exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1933) and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1950, 1964, 1980, and 1989).

Ralston Crawford was born in St. Catherine, Ontario, in 1906 and died in 1978. His work has been exhibited internationally including major exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska; and Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

Stuart Davis was born in Philadelphia in 1894 and died in New York in 1964. Recent exhibitions of his work have been held at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, and Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York.

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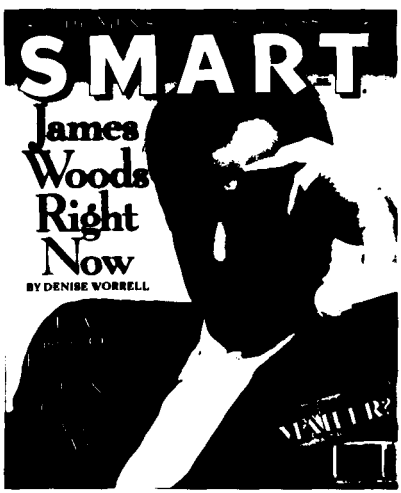

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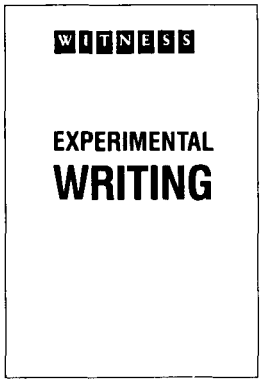

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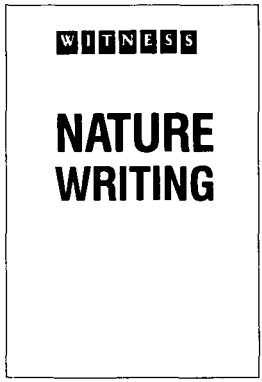

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